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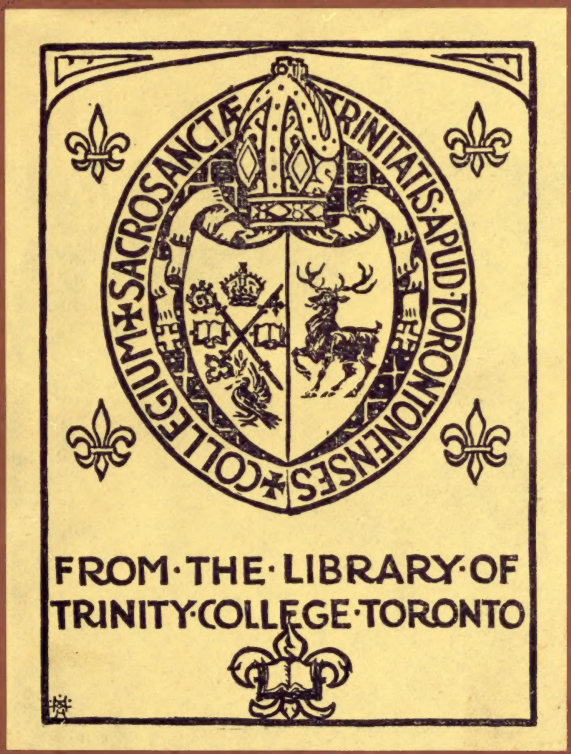
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HOLE'S PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON THE LITURGY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

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PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE CC.

THE EPISTLE FOR TRINITY-SUNDAY.

REV. iv. 1, to the end.—*After this I looked, and a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice, which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter; and immediately I was in the Spirit,* &c.

THE mysterious doctrine of the holy Trinity was but obscurely revealed under the Old Testament; for which reason, before Christ's coming, we find little or no knowledge of it. God the Father, speaking in the plural number in the creation of man, saying, 'Come, let us make man in our own image,' (Gen. i.,) is by some thought to denote the whole Trinity; and the mention of 'the Spirit's moving on the face of the waters,' and the 'Son's bruising the serpent's head,' (Gen. xviii.,) they take to refer to the three Persons in it. But these are dark discoveries of so great a truth; and to interpret the 'three persons that appeared to Abraham,' to be the three Persons of the holy Trinity, is not much better.

And a father tells us, that God on purpose concealed from the Jews the doctrine of the Trinity, lest they should thence take occasion to fall into idolatry, and worship a plurality of Gods, to which they were too prone.

But when Christ came, this mystery, which was in a great measure hidden from former ages, was brought into a clearer light by the gospel. At our Saviour's baptism, God the Father declared him by a voice from heaven to be his beloved and only-begotten Son; and the Holy Ghost descended on him at the same time, in the shape of a dove, to bear witness of him; where we have all the three Persons of the Trinity mentioned, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; all and each of which are after severally styled, 'God blessed for ever,' having all the titles and incommunicable properties and perfections of the Deity distinctly

ascribed to them; which made St. John to affirm, that 'there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one.' 1 John v. 7.

From hence the Church took occasion to profess and declare their faith in this great point, and to pay their solemn praises and adorations to the three several Persons: yea, though this doctrine of the blessed Trinity was daily owned in the hymns, creeds, and doxologies of the Church, yet one day was thought fit to be consecrated to the celebrating of this great and adorable mystery.

And because Christ's visible ascending up to heaven, and the Holy Ghost's visible descending from thence, gave no small light and confirmation to this great truth; therefore the Sunday after Whitsunday, which was before observed as the Octave of Pentecost, was made choice of for this purpose. And this is the day on which we now commemorate the holy Trinity. Accordingly, the collect for the day teaches us,—

First, By the confession of a true faith to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity.

Secondly, In the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity.

Thirdly, To pray for grace to be kept steadfast in this faith, against all adversities and opposition whatever. For the

First, The epistle for the day sets forth something of the glory of the eternal Trinity; from whence we may learn to acknowledge and adore it. This St. John here doth in a vision, representing God the Son sitting on the throne of his Father, and coming with his holy angels to judge the world. The vision begins in the first words: 'After this I looked, and behold a door was opened in heaven.' Here he seems, with St. Paul, to be rapt up 'to the third heaven.' 2 Cor. xii. 2. Where, looking about, he saw as it were the door of heaven opened unto him: 'And the first voice that I heard (saith he) was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter;' that is, by the help of a shrill loud voice, imitating the sound of a trumpet, he received revelations of some future things, which should in time come to pass; which things, we may suppose, related to the last judgment. Upon the sight and hearing of these things, 'immediately (saith he) I was in the spirit;' that is, in a trance or ecstasy, like St. Paul in the forecited place, 'Whether in the body or out of the body, he could not tell, God knoweth:' or else, his being in the spirit, might be his feeling some secret impulses or motions of God's Holy Spirit stirring within him. 'And behold, (saith he,) a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.' The throne here represented to him, as set up in heaven, was a throne erected for judicature; and the Son of God, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment, is the person here brought in as sitting upon this throne, whose glory

is after described by the lustre or shining of precious stones; for in the next words he tells us, that 'he that sat on the throne, was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald;' that is, the majesty or colours wherein he was represented, were like unto the colours of a jasper and sardine stone; the former, to wit, the jasper stone, for its firmness and hardness, represents the power and omnipotence of God; the latter, the sardine stone, for its fiery redness, represents the justice of God, who will come in flaming fire to consume the adversary. Heb. xii. 28. The rainbow that was round about the throne, was an emblem or token of God's covenant made with man, as we read Gen. ix. 13; the orient colours whereof represent the brightness that was round about the throne, and the appearance of the glory of the Lord. Ezek. i. 28. And this is said to be in sight like unto an emerald, which, for its pleasant greenness and mixture with other colours, represents the goodness of God, and his mixing mercy with judgment; delivering his people, at the same time that he destroys the ungodly.

Moreover, 'Round about this throne (as the following words declare) there were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.' Where, by the seats, are meant so many chairs placed about the throne, and by the elders sitting on them, are meant the saints who, at Christ's coming to judgment, shall sit as assessors with him. So he himself told his disciples: 'When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' Matt. xix. 28; which made St. Paul speak of it as a thing certain and well known: 'Do ye not know (saith he to the Corinthians) that the saints shall judge the world?' 1 Cor. vi. 23; meaning, that it is certain, that at the great final judgment of all the world, the saints shall bear Christ company in judging the wicked, and shall sit with him in pronouncing sentence against the evil spirits. Which elders or saints are said to be 'clothed in white raiment;' that is, in garments representing purity and innocence, as white linen doth; by which it appears, that white garments are not such bad attire, as some would make it, when the saints are here represented as arrayed in them. And these are said to 'have on their heads crowns of gold;' meaning, that they have received that crown of glory, which God the righteous Judge shall give them in that day.

To which it is added, that 'out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices;' signifying, that as there were lightnings, and thunderings, and terrible voices heard, at the giving of the law, to awe men to the observing, and terrify them from the breaking, of it; so will the like terrible signs and tokens appear, at the giving in evidence and pronouncing sentence against the wilful violators of it.

'And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne; which are the seven spirits of God.' These lamps are here interpreted to be the holy angels, which attend the throne of God, and are as ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them, who shall be heirs of salvation. But the lamps and the spirits here being both reckoned to the number seven, hath made some think them to be meant of the seven angels of the seven churches of Asia; though the confining them to these may, perhaps, be only a conjecture, founded more in a fancy about numbers, than on any good ground of true reasoning. Furthermore, it is said,—

That 'before the throne, there was a sea of glass like unto crystal:' where, by the sea, is meant the multitude of persons or people, that shall then stand before the tribunal of God, expressed here by a sea, or multitude of waters, which, in this book, often signifies a multitude or crowd of people coming like waves one upon another; as we read, Rev. xvii. 15. By the sea of glass like unto crystal, may be meant a multitude of people then appearing, whose consciences, like a crystal glass, shall reflect and lay open all their thoughts and actions, and make them visible before the Judge: though some would have this sea of glass to be a figure of heaven, represented as a sea for its largeness and extent; and of glass, for its purity and splendour. But I leave this to the wisdom of the learned.

To go on, it is here farther said, that 'in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.' Who these four beasts or living creatures in this representation were, is variously conjectured by the writers on this obscure book: some understand by them the four apostles, James, bishop of Jerusalem, our Lord's brother, Peter, John, and Andrew. By their being full of eyes before and behind, they understand their having the gift of interpreting Scriptures; by which they could look backward, and declare what was past; and having the gift of prophecy, they could look forward, and foretel what was to come. But these being only conjectures, let us go forward, and consider the description here given of them.

'The first beast was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had the face of a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle.' These likewise are, by sundry authors, variously interpreted: the Jewish writers take these four likenesses for the four ensigns or standards of Israel, viz., the likeness of a lion in the camp of Judah, of a man in the camp of Reuben, of an ox in the camp of Ephraim, of an eagle in the camp of Dan; of which likenesses we read also in the prophecy of Ezekiel, chap. i. 10.

Others again take these four likenesses for representations of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; which they take from the beginnings of their several gospels.

St. Mark, for beginning his gospel with the voice of one crying

in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' is wont to be represented by a lion.

St. Matthew, for beginning his gospel with the birth and genealogy of our Saviour, is represented by the face of a man.

St. Luke, for beginning his gospel with the prophet Zachary, who was used to offer sacrifices, is represented by an ox.

St. John, for beginning his gospel with the divinity of Christ, is represented by a flying eagle, which soars high, and carries our contemplations up to heaven. These conjectures have occasioned the picturing the four evangelists with these resemblances.

Now these being but uncertain guesses about doubtful matters, we may lay no great stress upon them, being content to be ignorant at present of some things, which we may hereafter better understand. And so much for the first part of this vision of St. John, which teaches us to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity: for here we find God the Father appointing, God the Son judging, and God the Holy Ghost approving and executing the sentences pronounced at the last and great day.

The second part of it will teach us, in the power of the Divine Majesty, to worship the Unity. For 'the four beasts' or living creatures, whatever they are, are said to 'have each six wings about them,' to make them quick and nimble in God's service; and to be 'full of eyes within,' to give them a full sight of their duty: and 'these rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come!' Where the thrice 'holy' denotes the three Persons of the Trinity, and the once 'Lord' in the singular number, betokens the Unity of the Godhead in all three; and their not resting day and night, invocating and praising of him, denotes their continual worshipping of this Trin-Une Deity, whose eternity is described by these words, 'Who was, and is, and is to come;' that is, who was before all time, is at present, and ever will be. And 'when those beasts,' or living creatures, 'give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever; the four and twenty elders,' or assessors, at the same time, 'fall down before the One God, that sitteth on the throne, and worship him alone that liveth for ever and ever;' all of them 'casting their crowns before the throne, and saying,' in the singular number, 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.'

Thus we see, in this vision of St. John, a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead, with a direction to acknowledge the one, and to adore the other. To which end, our Church teaches us,—

In the third place, to pray for grace to keep us steadfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities and opposition we may meet with in it. And this we should the rather do, because this great article of the Trinity hath met with no small opposition from the atheists, heretics, and sceptics of all

ages. The Arians of old were great enemies and opposers of this doctrine, and so were the Sabellians, Eunomians, and many others: and it is still struck at and sought to be undermined by the Deists, Socinians, and sensualists of our days, who set up their shallow reason above Divine revelation, and deride all those truths which they cannot comprehend. And because the contagion of these evil principles seems to spread too far, let us pray that our faith fail not, but that we may be kept steadfast in the belief of the Holy Trinity, who have each had their share in the work of our redemption; let us take heed that we forget not God that made us, nor deny the Lord that bought us, nor resist the Holy Spirit, that can alone sanctify and save us. Let not the seeming difficulties that attend this great truth, any way stagger or shake our faith, in a matter of so great concern and comfort to us. Our reason is puzzled about the daily objects of our senses, and can scarce know the nature of any thing that is before us; how then can we dive into the essence of God, or comprehend that which is incomprehensible? The mystery of the blessed Trinity being revealed to us by all the Persons of it, we know enough of it for our present state: and though reason alone cannot teach, and so may not presume to judge of it, yet we have all the reason in the world to believe it; being made known to us by him who is truth itself, and cannot deceive any. Our knowledge here is but in part, and we cannot see to the bottom of any thing; and much less may we hope to fathom this unsearchable depth. And yet God hath imparted to us knowledge enough to make us magnify him, and lessen ourselves; we know enough to learn humility, and to discover to us our own ignorance; and if we are modest and contented, we shall ere long know much more. In the mean time,—

Our faith in this article of the Trinity will be more noble and great, when it makes our reason to stoop to it, and overcomes all its doubts; and we shall better celebrate the Holy Trinity by a profound silence and adoration, than by disputing about it, or prying too curiously into the manner of it. And therefore instead of saying with Nicodemus, 'How can these things be?' let us pray with him in the gospel, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.'

Wherefore, in the last place, from what hath been said, let us all learn firmly to adhere to this great truth against all opposition; holding fast the profession of this faith without wavering; and not be warped or drawn from it by the smiles or frowns of any. To this end, let us consider,—

1. That this is what we have all promised in our baptism, viz., to believe all the articles of the christian faith, whereof this of the Holy Trinity is the prime fundamental one, upon which all the rest are founded. To keep to that, is a good means of being steadfast and immovable in all the rest; but if we waver and fall from that, we endanger the whole fabric of our faith, and run into infidelity. So that the Socinians and sceptics of our age,

that call in question this or any other article of the christian faith, are guilty of a manifest breach of their baptismal vow; they are deserters and renegadoes from the faith, in forsaking that, which they engaged to stick to to their lives' end. And such fugitives and revolters from the faith shall, ere long, receive the heavy punishment of their apostacy; which should teach us to beware of an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

2. Know that this doctrine of the Trinity hath not only Divine revelation to support it, which is the chiefest of all props; but likewise the concurrent testimony and consent of the catholic church in all ages to confirm it, which is an additional strength or motive to our belief of it: for he must be highly conceited of his own wisdom, that will set it up above the wisdom of God, and the faith of the whole catholic church. And having this evidence, let us continue steadfast in this faith without any wavering or doubtfulness. Moreover,—

3. Our Church minds us, in the service of this day, to pray for grace so to do, that we may ever acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and likewise persevere in worshipping the Unity. There may be many allurements and temptations to draw us from this faith, some endeavouring to discourage, and others to dispute us out of it; and therefore it will be requisite to call in the assistance of divine grace, to keep us firm and steady to it. And as the three Persons of the Trinity are one in nature, so let them be united in our devotion; still praying to the Father, in the name of the Son, and through the assistance of the Holy Ghost, that 'as long as we live we may praise them together, and magnify them in this manner.' So the apostles were wont to join them in their usual salutation; 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.' And the Church teaches the same in that devout doxology, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.' More particularly, let us this day especially bless God, for his gracious discovery of this sublime mystery, and thank our heavenly Father, that 'the mystery that was hid in former ages from the wise and prudent, is now revealed unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

In short, then, let us establish our minds in a steadfast belief of this divine truth, that nothing may shake or draw us from this faith in the ever-blessed and undivided Trinity: to which end, let us submit our reason to Divine revelation, believing what God hath told us, though we cannot fully understand the manner of it; waiting for a fuller manifestation of this and all other mysteries in the world to come.

'Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and praise, world without end. Amen.'

DISCOURSE CCI.

THE GOSPEL FOR TRINITY-SUNDAY.

JOHN iii. 1—16. — *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him,* &c.

THIS conference of our blessed Saviour with Nicodemus, serving to give some light into the knowledge and belief of the holy Trinity, is appointed to be read as the gospel for this day to that end. For here we have express and distinct mention made of God the Father, whose immediate power and presence was with Jesus Christ in all that he said or did, ver. 2. And likewise of God the Son, who 'came down from heaven,' and continued to be 'in heaven,' even when he 'conversed here on earth,' ver. 13. As also of God the Holy Ghost, who moving upon the waters of baptism, effects a new creation, as he did by moving upon the face of the waters in the old creation, vers. 5, 6. The relation of which particulars begin thus:—

'There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;' one of the Sanhedrim, their great council: 'the same came to Jesus by night,' not venturing to come by day, for fear of the Jews; 'and said unto him, Rabbi,' a title usually given to the Jewish doctors, 'we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' Where we have a plain confession of God the Father, to whose almighty influence he ascribes both his doctrine and miracles. Our Saviour, liking well enough of this confession, seeks to carry him farther, and to persuade him to be one of his proselytes and followers, saying unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' ver. 3. Nicodemus, as yet gross of understanding, and knowing little or nothing of such spiritual matters, replies to him, 'How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' Jesus, perceiving the dulness of his apprehension, and how little he knew of the christian religion, endeavours to inform him better, and to give him a clearer insight into heavenly and spiritual matters; to which end, he renews and explains his former answer, saying, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Where, beside what is said before and after of God the Son, is express mention of the Spirit, or God the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity; adding withal, that it is the receiving a new birth by baptism, and entering upon a new life by spiritual regeneration, that can alone qualify us for the sight and fruition of God; for

without the washing of water, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, we can neither enter into the church or kingdom of grace here, nor into heaven or the kingdom of glory hereafter. Proselytes were admitted of old by water into the Jewish church, and so they are still into the christian church by the waters of baptism; but so, that as the waters of Bethesda were stirred by an angel before they became medicinal or sanative for the health of the body, so the waters of baptism must be moved by the Holy Spirit, before they become useful or salutary for the health of the soul. And as the Jewish proselytes were said to be *recens nati*, new born, so the christian proselytes are, by the 'laver of regeneration,' said to be 'born again of water and the Holy Ghost. So that Nicodemus's error was the mistaking a natural for a spiritual regeneration, and taking an entrance into the church for a second entrance into the mother's womb. In short, the sense of our Saviour's words to Nicodemus was, that the owning his doctrine and miracles to be divine, was not sufficient for his salvation, but he must become a christian proselyte, or a follower of Christ, before he could receive any benefit by either; and that he must enter into the church, before he could enter into heaven; which shews us the absolute necessity of baptism in order to salvation, and the great danger of neglecting it, where it may be had by duly qualified and authorized persons.

Our Saviour having told him of this new and spiritual birth, he goes on to confirm it in the next verse: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Whatsoever is born of another, partakes of the nature and qualities of its sire or original; that which is born of the flesh is carnal and fleshly, disposed to vice and corruption; that which is born of the Spirit is spiritual, and hath the seeds of grace and eternal life. 'Marvel not, therefore, (saith Christ,) that I said unto thee, ye must be born again;' for in your first natural and unregenerate state, ye are dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, and heirs of damnation: whereas, by this new birth, ye are made children of grace, the sons of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. All which proceed from the free grace and bounty of the Holy Ghost, and its prolific operation upon the waters of baptism: for as 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,' so the inspirations of the Holy Spirit are free and voluntary: and, 'as thou hearest the sound of the wind, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth;' so the calls and motions of the Spirit are secret and invisible, and the influences thereof are better felt and heard than seen. So the wise man tells us, 'As thou knowest not the way of the Spirit, or how the child groweth in the womb, even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all.' Eccles. xi. 5. And therefore, let not this doctrine stumble thee; for though the manner of the Holy Ghost's working herein be supernatural and incomprehensible, yet the effects thereof are as apparent and visible as those of the wind.

Upon this discourse, Nicodemus, as yet backward of belief, or a man of little faith, 'answered and said unto him, How can these things be?' Which question supposes not only his doubting, but denying the truth of them: and his demanding the reason and manner of them, implies his looking upon them as incredible or impossible. To whom, therefore, our Saviour with some smartness replied, 'Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?' Is it possible that a ruler of the Jews, and a doctor in Israel, should be so great a stranger to these things? it being a known custom and practice among the Jews, to receive proselytes into their church by baptism as well as circumcision, and to style them new-born that were thus received into it.

Now, as Nicodemus was thus offended at the doctrine of the baptismal regeneration, because he could not see how these things should be, though he might daily see and know it from the doctrine of his own church in the case of proselytes; so the Nicodemuses, or great pretenders to reason in our days, deny the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and other mysteries of the gospel, because their shallow reason is not able to fathom the depth of them, nor their senses shew them how these things can be; though they have been received and owned by the whole christian church throughout all ages.

Hence we find the sceptics and sensualists often asking, how one should be three, and three one? How the same Person should be God and man, finite and infinite, when to be finite is not to be infinite, and to be infinite is not to be finite? Thus loading these divine doctrines with all the absurdities and contradictions they can; and so the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation are stumbling-blocks to the Socinians, and to the deists foolishness; and all because their reason cannot see the way and manner of their existence.

But 'canst thou by searching find out God? (saith holy Job,) Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.' Job xi. 7—9. Canst thou mete out the heavens with a span, or fathom the sea with a bucket, or measure the earth with a compass? And yet these things are infinitely more easy, than to comprehend him that is incomprehensible. Holy Job elsewhere tells us, that God accuses the very angels of folly, in prying too far into things which they cannot fully understand: and how much more justly may he condemn the sons of men of madness, in searching too much into things that are unsearchable, and past finding out by human reason? Can a worm know the nature of man, or can man understand much of the nature of angels? And how, then, should we know much of God, between whom and us the distance is infinitely greater? Alas! all the creatures of the world, in comparison of him, are but as the small drop of the bucket, that diminishes not the

measure, or as the light dust upon the balance, that alters not the weight; yea, they are all nothing, less than nothing, and vanity: and how then can our short sight penetrate into the Divine nature, and the manner of its existence? or our finite understandings grasp infinity? But to cure this itch of curiosity, or rather scab of infidelity, let us consider,—

1st, The shortness of our sight, even in natural things that lie more level to it: there are mysteries in nature, art, and Providence, that baffle and confound our reason; and many things which we daily behold and believe too, are above the reach of our understanding. How shallow and imperfect is our insight into many common and ordinary matters? Are not the wisest philosophers puzzled about the nature of sounds and colours, which are the daily and ordinary objects of our senses? Who can solve the riddles of sympathy and antipathy? or shew why the loadstone draws iron, when its influence reaches not things of a more likely and easy attraction? Is not reason at a loss about the ebbing and flowing of the sea? And can it tell why the needle of the compass should so faithfully and constantly observe the north pole? Does not every little fly or worm puzzle us to find out the secret springs of their life and motion? Who can tell what kind of knot it is that ties our soul and body together? or explain that sacred band that unites time to eternity? And is it reasonable to doubt or deny either, because we cannot know how they subsist and are united together? But if our reason be thus short-sighted in natural and common things, that daily occur to our senses, then consider,—

2dly, How weak it must needs be in divine and spiritual matters, which are so much above them; here certainly our candle must burn very dim, and stand in need of some brighter light to illuminate and direct it: 'The natural man discerns not the things of God, (saith the apostle,) neither indeed can he, because they are spiritually discerned.' 1 Cor. ii. 14. And therefore it must be great folly and presumption in any to reject the mysteries of the gospel, because their weak reason cannot discover how these things should be. Does not the splendour of some objects dazzle and confound the sight? Can our weak eyes steadfastly behold the sun? And if our shallow understandings cannot comprehend natural and earthly matters, why should we think them able to fathom supernatural and heavenly truths? So our Saviour here argues with Nicodemus; 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?' Ver. 12. Moreover, consider,—

3dly, That these truths are revealed from heaven by him that is truth itself, and therefore there can be no reason to doubt or disbelieve them. We are expressly told, that 'there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one,' 1 John v. 7; where a Trinity of Persons is asserted in the Unity of the Godhead; and we may

safely build upon the word of him, that can neither deceive or be deceived. There are some truths in religion that were never propounded to our reason, being above the ken and discovery of it: such is this doctrine of the holy Trinity, which we are to take upon God's word, and to believe without scanning. For to oppose our reason to revelation, is to set a candle above the sun; yea, it is to choose darkness rather than light, and to follow a blind guide before an infallible director. Reason, indeed, is a good guide, as far as it can reach; but as the eye is limited in its prospect, and cannot see beyond its sphere, so hath God set bounds to our reason, saying, 'Hither shall it come, and no farther:' it may see a great way in visible and corporeal objects, but it is blind in mysteries, and cannot look within the veil; here it must yield to faith, and resign to revelation. We know but in part here; and therefore in these sublime and mysterious truths we must be content to be ignorant, and submit our reason to faith, without prying too far into the manner of them, or saying, with Nicodemus, 'How can these things be?'

But to go on with the conference; our Saviour having acquainted Nicodemus with the great mysteries of the baptismal regeneration, and the holy Trinity, he proceeds to the testimony given for the proof of them; viz., the testimony of miracles and eye-witnesses, the best evidence that can be given of any truth; called therefore in Scripture, 'The demonstration of the Spirit and power.' Now this evidence we have in the next verse, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness;' that is, I and my disciples teach you doctrines that we know by Divine revelation, and have been confirmed to us by miracles before our eyes. So St. John, 'That which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with the Son, and with the Holy Ghost,' 1 John i. 1. Yea, Christ here adds concerning himself, that 'no man hath ascended up to heaven,' to gain the knowledge of these things, but 'he that came down from heaven,' to reveal his Father's will, 'even the Son of Man who is in heaven,' by his Divine nature; even whilst in his human nature he converses with, and teaches us here upon earth: and yet (saith he to Nicodemus and the rest of the Jews) 'ye receive not our witness' in these heavenly things, though they stand so well confirmed by divine and human testimony, which must render your unbelief the more unreasonable and inexcusable.

But yet for all this, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness on a pole, so must the Son of Man be lifted up on a cross;' to the end, 'that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;' that is, as all that looked up to the brazen serpent were healed of all manner of diseases, so all that by an eye of faith look up to Jesus shall be freed

from all the maladies of the soul, and made partakers of eternal life.

This is briefly the substance of this day's gospel; which may serve,—

1st, To convince us of the great and indispensable necessity of baptism: for though Nicodemus here made a good confession, by owning Christ to be 'a teacher come from God,' and believing his miracles to be such as 'none could do except God were with him;' yet this was not sufficient without baptism, for Christ tells him, that 'except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Where, being born again of water can be meant only of baptism, there being no new birth by that element, but by that sacrament. And this is here made so necessary, that there is no admission into the church here, or into heaven hereafter, without it. And therefore Christ gave a commission to his apostles, 'to go and baptize all nations, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' Matt. xxviii.; signifying, that disciples are to be received into the church by the waters of baptism. Accordingly, we read, that all the proselytes and converts to Christianity, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, were admitted into it by this ceremony; 'Repent and be baptized' (saith St. Peter to the three thousand converts,) Acts ii. 38. 'Arise, why tarriest thou? and be baptized,' (saith Ananias to Saul upon his conversion to Christianity,) Acts xxii. 16. Lydia and her house were admitted into the church this way; and so was the jailor and his family; and so have all Christians been ever since. All which shew us what regard we are to have for this sacrament, and what care parents are to take to bring their children to it; especially considering, first, the great benefits they receive by this sacred ordinance. This is the door of entrance into the kingdom of heaven, and therefore our Saviour would have 'children' brought to it, because 'theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Mark x. 14. It is the ordinary means of salvation; for 'he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.' Mark xvi. 16. The Spirit of God accompanying this ordinance, gives the remission of sins, and seals to us the promise of eternal life. To this we may add, secondly, the consideration of the extreme danger of denying or delaying of baptism; for 'he that believeth not,' and is unbaptized, 'shall be damned.' By omitting of this sacrament, we do as it were shut the gate of heaven against infants, and deprive them of the ordinary way and means of their salvation; which should make all parents afraid or ashamed of this neglect.

2dly, From Nicodemus's denying the bapismal regeneration, and others denying the doctrine of the Trinity, because their weak reason cannot comprehend how these things should be; we may learn not to depend too much upon our own reason, but to rely chiefly on Divine revelation in such mysteries: for the former, we see, is a crooked, erring, and uncertain rule; the latter

is a sure, safe, and infallible guide. We know how the Gentiles lost their way, when they had no better conduct than their own reason; and how the heathens were bewildered, when they followed only the blind and uncertain guidance of natural light; both which led them into many vain superstitions and gross idolatries; but thanks be to God, we are not left to grope in the dark as they were, but are happily assisted by brighter revelations. Let us not, then, prefer a candle before the sun, or set up our dim reason above the light of divine revelations; that is, let us not scan mysteries by our weak and shallow apprehensions, but rather make them the objects of our admiration than curiosity. Particularly in this of the Trinity, let us thankfully acquiesce in what God hath revealed to us of himself, evermore praising him, and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth.'

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one God, be ascribed, as is most due, all glory, honour, praise, might, majesty, and dominion, both now and evermore. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 JOHN iv. 7, to the end. — *Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God: he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love*, &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to beg of God the acceptance of our prayers, and the assistance of our infirmities, that so in keeping his commandments we may please him both in will and deed.

The epistle mentions and insists upon the great commandment of love, which is, indeed, the sum of all the commandments; and the keeping of it is therefore styled, 'the fulfilling of the law.'

It begins with an exhortation to this excellent grace, which it backs with many pressing motives and encouragements, and concludes with some marks and trials of the truth of it, as we shall find in the following discourse.

I begin, as the epistle doth, with the exhortation to this grace of love, in these words, 'Beloved, let us love one another;' where it is ushered in with the kind compellation of 'Beloved,' the better to insinuate and instil this lesson into us. St. John is in Scripture styled, 'The beloved disciple,' or 'the disciple whom Jesus loved;' for he leaned on his breast, and so was nearest his heart, and knew more of his mind than any other: by which means his breast being inflamed with the love of God, breathed out nothing but love to the brethren: 'Beloved, (saith he,) let us love one another.'

But what is the love here exhorted to? Now, though love be a passion better felt than described, yet the love here recommended may be thus defined: It is a virtue or gracious disposition of soul, that keeps men from doing any harm, and puts them upon doing all the good they can to one another. Where,—

First, I style it a virtue, for so it is both moral and theological: as it is dictated by the natural law of reason, it is a moral virtue, and so it is handled by the heathen philosophers; as it is revealed and required by the written law of God, it is a theological grace or virtue, and so it is handled by divines. Again,—

Secondly, I style it a gracious disposition of soul, to signify the seat of it, which is within the heart, where all true love is seated, not outward only in the lip or the tongue, which is no better than hypocrisy and dissimulation. Again,—

Thirdly, Here are added the two essential properties of love, which are to do no manner of harm, and to do all possible good to one another.

1st, I say, true love keeps men from doing any the least harm to another; for 'love worketh no ill to his neighbour,' yea, 'it thinketh no evil,' saith the apostle, and harbours not the least thought of doing any bad turn. Now men, you know, may receive much harm from another sundry ways; as in the soul, by drawing them into sin, or creating to them any unnecessary grief or trouble; in the body, by maiming, murder, and any other acts of violence; in his goods, by taking or withholding from him any thing that is his; in his good name, by spreading evil reports, backbiting, and detraction: from all which evils the love here required will effectually restrain us; for these being the common effects of envy, hatred, and malice, are inconsistent with that love we owe to one another.

2dly, True love not only keeps men from the least harm, but puts them upon doing all the good they can to each other; for love wishes well to his neighbour, and that will move to the doing all good offices for him. Now, as men may receive much hurt, so may they receive much good from one another: as, in in their soul, by keeping them from sin, and lightening the burden of their sorrows; in their bodies, by preserving them from violence and ill usage, by relieving their necessities, and healing their distempers; in their goods, by defending them from fraud, rapine, and oppression, and helping them to right that suffer wrong; in their good names, by vindicating them from all unjust calumnies, censures, and evil reports, and giving them the just praises due to their merits and good works. These, and many other good offices, may be done to mankind, which the true love we are to bear to one another will make us ever ready and willing to perform. This is briefly the nature and properties of that brotherly love which we are here exhorted to; to press and recommend which, the apostle tells us,—

In the next words, the rise and original of this love, whence it comes, and how it may be attained; 'for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God;' meaning, that love is the most divine and god-like thing that can be found in us; by it we become most especially like unto God, and resemble him in that darling attribute and perfection, in which he most delighteth. Love is a ray of the Divinity darted upon us, and, where it is fixed, makes us in some measure partakers of the Divine nature; for 'every one that loveth is born of God;' he is of a heavenly rise and extraction, and comes from the divine and spiritual seed; he is born not of the will of man, but of God, whom he resembles in his nature and perfection, as children do their parents in their features and complexion. Nothing makes us more the children of God, or more nearly allied to the Divine Majesty, than this grace of love, which is our greatest glory, and renders us most amiable and acceptable to him; for thereby God communicates himself to us, and gives us the most intimate acquaintance with, and knowledge of, his mind; for he that loveth, is not only born of God, 'but knoweth God;' that is, not with a bare notional knowledge, such as evil men and spirits have, which rather makes them tremble at, than rejoice at him; but with a saving experimental knowledge, such as only good men and saints have, who are thereby made like unto God, and transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Whereas,—

'He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love:' he is an utter stranger to the Divine nature, and never felt its influence; he knoweth nothing of God as he ought to know, being destitute of love; he hath nothing of God in him, who is made up of love and kindness to mankind; he hath more of envy and enmity of the evil spirits, to whom he conforms in his nature, and with whom he shall have his portion. To know God aright, is to be followers of him as dear children, and to walk in love; for his very nature and essence consists in love, and we cannot imitate or resemble him more than by the acts of kindness and charity.

But wherein doth this transcendent love of God to mankind appear? Why, among other things, the apostle gives us a high and eminent instance of it in the next verse: 'In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.' When we were utterly lost and undone by the first transgression, and thereby left in a helpless and hopeless condition, God was pleased, out of his tender mercy, to take pity upon us, and to send his only Son out of his bosom to recover us from this forlorn state; and, because nothing else could do it, he was content to die for us, that we might live through him. When we were dead in trespasses and sins, he restored us again to a life of grace, and by his Holy Spirit hath given us the assured

hopes of being raised to a life of glory. And what greater expression of love could be ever shewn us, than the Father's in sending, the Son's in consenting, the Spirit's in assisting, and all of them in contriving and effecting these things for us?

'Herein is love, (saith our apostle,) not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;' that is, herein will this love of God appear the greater, that we did not begin with any love to God, that might engage or encourage him to make this return to us; for we, alas! had no sense of our condition, no power to help ourselves, no, nor yet ability so much as to ask any relief; but he began with us, and was beforehand in his love to us; yea, he was so early as to prevent us with his loving-kindness, before we knew any thing of it, and sent his Son to propitiate his wrath, and reconcile us to himself, when we were enemies and strangers to him; which must enhance his love above all expression or conception.

From hence the apostle very rationally infers, 'Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' These inexpressible and unrequitable acts of the Divine love should stir up in us something of a like love and affection to the brethren; not that we can answer or come up to the height of his unparalleled love towards us, but that we should imitate and return in all the good offices that we can, not objecting unkindness or unworthiness in any; for he loved us without any merit, or any other motive but his own goodness; he is kind to the evil and the unthankful, and causes the sun to shine upon the just and the unjust: and we are bid to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful; that is, to imitate him in the undistinguished acts of his love and bounty; but much more are we to express our affection to such as either need, desire, or deserve our kindness.

All the requital that God expects for his bounty and goodness, is the return of acts of love and kindness to the brethren: as for himself, he is above our beneficence; our goodness extendeth not to him; we can present him with nothing, but what was his own before: all that we can do is to express our love, and extend our kindness to one another; which, if done for God's sake, and in obedience to his command, will be an acceptable oblation.

Beside, as we are not capable of giving any thing unto God, so neither is he capable of receiving any thing from us; for 'no man (saith our apostle) hath seen God at any time.' All acts of love and kindness pass among such as see and converse with each other; and the objects of our senses are commonly the objects of our compassion and charity: whereas God is invisible, and above the reach of our eye or converse; and so no good office of ours is able to come at him.

But though we cannot see God in his person, yet we may daily behold him in his members; and what we do to any of these, he

reckons as done to himself; yea, 'if we love one another,' he is not far from any of us; for 'he then dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us:' he takes up his abode in a heart that is filled with love; he resides in it by his Holy Spirit, and raises its love to the highest perfection.

But by what mark or token may we know this dwelling of God in us, and we in him? Why, that we are told in the next verse: 'Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' If we find the influence of the Holy Spirit moving in us by the fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and the like, we may conclude that God is in us of a truth; for if God be love, as he frequently styles himself, then where love is, there is God; he is an inhabitant in the bosom where love resides, and he is a stranger to the breast where that is wanting. By this Spirit (saith our apostle), 'we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world:' which is such an instance of the Divine love, as cannot but inflame our hearts with love to God, and to one another. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error; 'Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.' Such a faith in the Son of God, working by love, can proceed only from the Spirit of God dwelling in us; and by that 'we have known and believed the love that God hath to us, that God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.' This is the mark here given of our relation to God, and his residence with us, viz., the love we bear both to him and the brethren; which the apostle here doubles and repeats, that we may the better know and try ourselves by it.

Now the perfection of this love consists in a bold owning and confessing of these truths in times of greatest danger; for so the next words tell us; 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world:' meaning, that when our love comes to the trial of the last day, it may be found constant and sincere, that as Christ is true and constant to us, so may we be to him in this world. The love that Christ bore to us did set him above the fear of death, or any manner of discouragement that might hinder the effects of his kindness to us; and the love we bear to him should not suffer us to shrink from our faith and confidence in him, for the fear or frowns of any.

'There is no fear in love,' saith the beloved disciple; true love is not daunted with the appearance of any difficulties, but rather gladly embraces the opportunity of surmounting them. 'Perfect love casteth out fear,' it banisheth all fear of danger, yea, even of death itself, and declines not the hardest proof or trial of its sincerity: it inspires men with courage enough to despise difficulties, and delights in what may best express its constancy. 'Fear hath torment,' and is evermore attended with anxiety and trouble; that

weak passion creates pain upon the least prospect of danger, and will not suffer men to go on in any enterprise, that hath any show of it, but is apt to draw back upon every light occasion; and therefore 'he that feareth is not made perfect in love:' such a one will forsake his friend upon the least temptation, and refuse to own or stand by him when any danger appears; and consequently hath never arrived to the perfection of love, nor will ever find the comfort or reward of it.

But is love then accompanied with no kind of fear? Are we not bid to fear God, as well as to love him? And may not these well enough consist together? Is not perfection ascribed as much to the fear as to the love of God? And why then must these cast out or exclude each other? In answer to this we may note, that there is,—

1st, A base, cowardly fear, that shrinks from all trouble, and will run no hazards for the beloved object: and such a fear as that is void of all true love, and is utterly inconsistent with it. And there is,—

2dly, A prudent and cautious fear, that prevents needless trouble, and preserves from unnecessary dangers: and this may very well consist with true love, and indeed ought to go with it; for we are bid to be 'wise as serpents,' to avoid all unnecessary danger and trouble: and also 'harmless as doves,' which are emblems of love and innocence. Besides, we may observe farther a servile fear, which is the fear of slaves and vassals, who do nothing but from a dread of punishment, or fear of the lash: and this likewise is void of all true love, and is cast out by it. As also a filial fear, which is the fear of sons or children towards their parents, who are afraid of offending them, and watchful against all occasions of it; and this is not only consistent with love, but is a good sign and effect of it.

This is the love that we owe unto God, and is indeed the mere duty of gratitude; for he began with us, and when we were enemies to him, that deserved nothing but wrath and vengeance, he sent his Son to die for us, and reconcile us to himself: for which reason, (as St. John tells us in the next words,) 'we may well enough love him, because he first loved us.' Love, we say, is the loadstone of love, that draws very strongly, and by an invisible influence constrains us to return it; but the unparalleled instances of the Divine love should powerfully move and excite our affections, and kindle the warmest flames of love in our breasts towards God. And this, as we have before seen, is to be expressed by our love to the brethren; insomuch (as the apostle here adds), 'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?' The love of God and our neighbour are inseparable, being the two great commandments, that are often linked and joined together, as we read, Matt. xxii. 38, 39. And he that would put

them asunder by pretending to love the one without the other, doth but falsify and deceive both himself and others: for it is impossible truly to love God, and not to do as he bids; especially in so reasonable a command as shewing kindness to those who are so nearly allied both to him and us. He that loves another will shew some regard to his children and friends, and such as appertain to him, for his sake; and if we love God as we ought, we shall express it to those that bear his image and belong to him. Likeness is a usual cause and motive of love, and God having made man in his own likeness, and in the same likeness to each other, we should be thereby moved to love God and one another.

Moreover, sight and conversation are apt to breed love and friendship; it being much easier to love one whom we daily behold and converse with, than one that we never saw. And hence the apostle argues, that if a man loves not his brother, whom he daily sees, he cannot love God, whom he never saw.

From all which the beloved disciple concludes with these words, 'And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, loves his brother also.' Both of them are enjoined by the same authority, and he that violates the one, is guilty of the breach of the other.

This is briefly the sense and sum of this day's epistle, which breathes out nothing but love to God in the first place; whose transcendent greatness in himself, and goodness to his creatures, may justly challenge and exact it from us: to our brethren and neighbours, in the next place, whose affinity in nature and blood doth likewise require it. There is implanted in us a natural disposition to love those of the same kind: we see something of it among brute beasts, who agree well enough among themselves; and we must be more savage than they, if we hate and prey upon one another. Again,—

There is a great deal of solid and substantial pleasure in loving and doing good to one another; it is a Divine and Godlike thing, and nothing makes us more like, or more acceptable to him; it cheers the mind with such an inward peace and tranquillity, as far exceed all sensual pleasures and delights.

Finally, Love will be attended, at last, with an ample and everlasting reward, and fill the soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory: it will draw the affections of God to us, and fix them so, that we shall live for ever in the unquenchable flames of the Divine love. Indeed, the love of God and our brother, is the best qualification for those heavenly mansions where love reigns, and is advanced to its highest perfection; to which if we ever hope to come, we must, as Christ hath given commandment, love one another: for there no hatred, malice, or discord enter; nothing but perfect love and amity can inhabit in those pure and happy regions. For which, therefore, let us prepare ourselves by an unfeigned love to God and the brethren.

DISCOURSE CCIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xvi. 19, to the end.—*There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores,* &c.

IN the epistle for this day, St. John had been pressing, by sundry arguments, taken from the nature, the precepts, and the example of God himself, the great duty of brotherly love, to be expressed in all acts of humanity and charity. And here, in the gospel for the day, St. Luke sets forth the extreme danger of neglecting this duty, or casting it off by hardheartedness and inhumanity. And this he doth here in these words: 'There was a certain rich man,' &c. The words are understood by some as a history; by others, and that the greater number, as a parable, wherein are symbolically represented the different state and condition of good and bad men in the next world; that is, the great miseries that will follow abused prosperity, and likewise the unspeakable comforts that attend an honest, humble, and afflicted poverty; both which are here plainly set forth. Where we are to consider,—

First, the persons here related, and they are Dives and Lazarus, the poor and the rich man; with the different carriage and behaviour of each. And,—

Secondly, The different fate or end of both; which things contain the substance and design of this parable.

First, then, The parable begins with an account of 'a certain rich man,' named Dives, 'who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;' which is a brief description of one swimming in all manner of plenty and luxury; and decked in all the gaiety and gallantry that this world can afford; his apparel consisting of 'purple,' the clothing of princes; and 'fine linen,' the gorgeous attire of courts and palaces. Accordingly, Babylon, with its riches, is described by 'a great city clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.' Rev. xviii. 16. For his diet, that is described by his 'faring sumptuously every day;' meaning, that his table was daily spread with all manner of rich and costly provisions; the air, the sea, and the land were ransacked to furnish him with all sorts of dainties and varieties. In a word, both his dishes and his dresses were set forth with the utmost pomp and bravery, all which he enjoyed and indulged himself in, without the least regard to, or relief of, the wants and necessities of others. Again,—

The next verse tells us of 'a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.' This is a description of one sinking under the greatest burden of earthly misery and distress, and groaning under the pinching necessities of hunger and thirst; his body full of sores, and yet exposed to the sharp and open air, without any friend to succour or help him; insomuch that the very dogs came and licked his sores; his flesh pining away for lack of the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and having nothing to satisfy the wants and cravings of his nature. This poor man, in this sad condition, was laid at the rich man's gate, in hopes of some relief; but found none from that hardhearted wretch, though his desires were so modest as to ask only for crumbs to comfort and support him; yea, the very dogs that ate the crumbs under the table, shewed more compassion than he, for they came and licked his sores, when the master shewed no manner of pity.

By which we see the different and unequal fortunes, states, and conditions of men in this world; some flowing in all manner of affluence and plenty, and others labouring under the calamities of want and scarcity; and likewise the different tempers and dispositions of men here, some commiserating and relieving, others slighting and turning the deaf ear to the loudest cries and wants of the needy; both which are so well known as to need no insisting on. But,—

Secondly, What followed hereupon? Why, the next words acquaint us, that 'the beggar soon after died.' Perhaps starved with hunger, and perishing for lack of necessaries; but however that be, the poor man 'was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom;' the place of rest and peace, where the souls of good men go after death, and remain till the resurrection and day of judgment; called sometimes paradise, where our Saviour's soul, with that of the penitent thief, went after their crucifixion; and here it is called Abraham's bosom, a mansion for those blessed souls that depart hence in the Lord, where they rest from their labours, and abide in a comfortable expectation of farther bliss and glory; and this our Saviour foretold should be the portion of sound believers, to sit down with Abraham, &c. Matt. viii. 11, &c.

'And it came to pass, (saith the parable,) that the rich man also died and was buried.' Death is the common lot of all mankind; poor and rich, base and honourable, none are exempted from that fatal stroke, but all meet in the house appointed for all the living. There the dust of one man will not give place to the dust of another, but all lie promiscuously mingled and shuffled together; and they who have fared most deliciously, become but the fatter feast for worms. Riches cannot bribe or put off death, nor can any man's wealth and plenty secure him from the grave, but rather sink him the sooner into it; their table ofttimes

becomes a snare to catch themselves withal, and what was intended for their good, proves many times an occasion of falling. So we read here, 'The rich man also died, and was buried.' We heard nothing before of the poor man's burial, and perhaps he had none, but passed away in the same silence and obscurity in which he lived, his meanness and poverty not amounting to the charges of a funeral. But of the rich man it is here said, that he died and 'was buried;' and he, no doubt, had a solemn and splendid funeral, suitable to the pomp and grandeur in which he lived, having all the ceremonies of state and mourning that commonly attend and adorn such solemnities.

But what became of this rich man after death? Why, he was carried into hell, the place of misery and torment, where the departed souls of wicked men go and remain till the day of judgment. He was not carried by angels, as the poor man was, into Abraham's bosom, there 'to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;' but was hurried away by evil spirits into 'everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.' There, nothing of his pomp, only the punishment of his cruelty and ingratitude, followed him; where he found no mercy, because he never shewed any; for 'in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.' Which words are not to be understood literally, as if they could see one another at the distance of those places; for we are told after, that between them 'there is a great gulf fixed,' so that the bodily eye cannot reach to the beholding or discerning each other so far. And therefore, the words are to be understood figuratively, as an aggravation of Dives's misery, to find himself so grievously tormented, when Lazarus whom he despised was seated in a place of endless joy and happiness. This he knew by some revelation or other, and the thoughts and envy of it racked his breast, and filled it with horror and despair. And, indeed, it must be a very great addition to the torments of the damned, at once to feel their own tortures, and know the eternal joys and blessedness of others. In this desperate and deplorable condition, Dives is represented as one that 'cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' These words are still to be taken figuratively; for such a communication cannot be supposed between paradise and hell, as to send messages, to receive answers, or to hear discourses from the one place to the other; much less can it be imagined, that one should go from Abraham's bosom to carry water on the tip of his finger, to cool the tongue of another in hell. But these expressions are used, the farther to heighten and represent the misery and condemnation of the wicked in the other world; that Dives, who refused to hear the cries of Lazarus, should be forced to cry himself for some relief from him, and to beg mercy from him, to whom he would shew none; that

he who denied a crumb of bread or a drop of beer out of his abundance to a poor beggar, should be himself driven to ask a drop of water in his extreme want; and that too to cool his tongue with a little water, which he had before inflamed with too much wine. Which things are here related in a parabolical way, to shew the danger of such a hardhearted temper, and the suitable punishments that will follow upon such unmerciful practices.

But what answer did the rich man receive in this his great necessity? Why, that the following words declare: Abraham said unto him, 'Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' Where the term 'son' is used not to signify that he was a true son of Abraham, 'the father of the faithful;' for then he would have been received into 'Abraham's bosom:' but it is a vulgar manner or kind of speaking, accommodated to the tenor of this narration, wherein it is usual to call one another by the name of sons or brethren. But in answer to his request, he tells him what he was now in reason and justice to expect; for he had received his portion of good things in the plenty and abundance of earthly things, which he had already enjoyed and spent upon himself in his lifetime, without imparting any of it to the necessities of others: and, on the other hand, Lazarus hath had his portion of evil things in the hardships and afflictions he hath already sustained in this world. And therefore it is but justice and equity that Lazarus should be now rewarded for the evil things which he so patiently endured; and thou punished for the good things thou hast so wickedly abused. In this answer of faithful Abraham we may observe two or three things:—

1st, That there is some portion of good things belonging to every one, which he is to receive either in this world or in the next; for we being all God's creatures and children, he reckons himself obliged to provide and take care of us, and at least to give to each a child's portion. Beside, there is none so abandoned to sin and wickedness, but hath something of good in him, some commendable quality or other, to which something of a reward is in a manner due: and these are here and elsewhere called a man's good things. Again, there is a portion of evil things belonging to every man, which he is to receive either here or hereafter: for as there is none so bad but hath something of good in him, which God as a kind father rewards with good things; so there is none so good, but hath something of evil in him, which God as a just judge punishes with evil things: and these are here said to be his evil things. Now he that receives all his good things here in this life, without any alloy or mixture of sufferings for his bad deeds, hath all his portion of good in this world, and shall receive the punishment of his evil in the world to come. As, on the other side, he that hath received his evil things in the sufferings and troubles of this life, shall receive the reward of his good deeds in the next. This is the case here between Dives and Lazarus,

where Abraham bids Dives remember, that 'he in his lifetime had received his good things, and Lazarus evil things; and therefore Lazarus is comforted, and he is tormented.' And this may teach us, that prosperity is not always a sign of God's favour, nor adversity of his frowns, for the one may be given in wrath, and the other in love; and therefore we should not be lifted up with prosperity, nor cast down with adversity, or in any affliction that may befall us.

2dly, We may observe here, that it is not the possessing, no nor the spending of riches, that is the cause of these future torments, but the doing both in a wrong way; it is the ill-getting, and the ill-using of wealth that bring on heavy punishments. Dives was condemned to hell not for being rich, but for spending his riches in luxury and vanity, when he saw others to want necessaries, without giving them any relief. His sumptuous fare and gorgeous attire had been innocent enough, had he fed the hungry with what was left, and covered the naked with his cast clothes: but his strutting in purple and fine linen, when Lazarus was naked and shivering, and ready to die with the cold; his denying him the crumbs of his table, when he was just perishing at his doors, was such a piece of hardheartedness as justly deserved the greatest torments. However, riches are not to be blamed for the fault of the owners; for they are the blessings of God, and capable of serving many good ends. If we use the good things of this life well, they will bring us to much better in the next; it is only the abuse of them here that dooms us to evil things hereafter. And therefore our care should be, not only to get the wealth and substance of this world, but to have hearts to use and employ it aright, that it may tend to our present comfort, and the increase of our future felicity.

3dly, We may observe farther, that as it is not the possessing, but the abusing of riches, that brings on future torments; so it is not poverty only, but a pious and patient behaviour under it, that entitles to future comforts. It was not poverty alone that carried Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, but a poverty attended with an honest, meek, and contented mind: for he did not open his mouth in murmuring, lying, or blaspheming, nor reach out his hand to picking and stealing; but quietly resigned himself to God's disposal, and trusted in his providence for a deliverance when he should see fit. If a poor man be a thief or a liar, proud and impatient, and a contemner of God and good things, his unsanctified poverty will not help him, he hath forfeited all title to favour; and to the evil things he hath received here, will be added much worse hereafter. In short, Dives was tormented, not for being rich, but for being hardhearted and unmerciful, for spending all his wealth upon his own vanities, and sparing nothing to the relief of Lazarus's necessities; and Lazarus was comforted not barely for being poor, but for patiently submitting to God's will, casting his care upon him in well-doing, and waiting for a recompense of his sufferings in God's due time.

The sense then of Abraham's answer to Dives is, to shew that wicked men, who prosper in their wickedness, have all their portion in the good things of this life; and for their abusing and mispending of them now, shall receive nothing but the evil things of misery and punishment in the world to come: and likewise that they who have their portion in the afflictions and troubles of this world, shall be recompensed with better things at the resurrection of the just.

As to that part of Dives's request, to send Lazarus with a little relief to ease his torments, Abraham replies farther, that 'between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from you.' Which words relate either to the distance of the places between them, which would admit of no correspondence, or passing from the one to the other; or else to that irreversible decree passed upon them, whereby it was utterly impossible to give them any relief in their condition, or to get them a release for one moment out of their miserable state; for the gates of mercy were then shut, and it was in vain to ask for that now, which should have been done sooner. Hereupon,—

Dives, finding his torments to be endless, easeless, and remediless, said unto Abraham, 'I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' Which words are still parabolical, and signify, not that there is so much charity and goodness in hell, as to call men to repentance, and to caution others to avoid that place of torment, in which they had unhappily plunged themselves; but the design of those words was, to enhance the misery and torments of the damned, that they were so great that they could not bear them themselves, nor would they wish them to their greatest enemies, and much less to their friends and relations. However, Abraham replies to him, that they have sufficient warning already in those matters; for 'they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.' They may daily read or hear these expounded to them, and by God's ministers are frequently called upon to reform and amend their lives out of the Scriptures. 'Nay, but Father Abraham, (saith he,) if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.' Such an unusual thing would prevail more with them than all the common and ordinary means are wont to do. A messenger from the dead, that related to them, from his own sight and knowledge, the dreadful punishments of the wicked in the other world, would be much more minded and hearkened to than the remote and silent notices of Moses and the prophets; yea, such an eye-witness to testify these things, would, in all probability, work more, and leave deeper impressions upon men's minds, than all the discourses of those that never saw them. To which Abraham rejoined again,—

'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.' Which words plainly suppose,—

1st, That they had sufficient revelations of a future state, together with the happiness and misery that follows and belongs to it.

2dly, That it is our duty to hearken to and be directed by them, without seeking or desiring any new or farther revelations. And,—

3dly, If we are not convinced by the revelations already made in God's word, we shall not be persuaded by any other, no not if one rise from the dead. For the—

1st, I say, that God hath made sufficient discoveries to us of the happiness and misery of a future state, and summed up the whole of our duty with relation to both, notified and confirmed to us in the holy Scriptures. 'They have Moses and the prophets, (saith Abraham,) which was a far better light than that of natural reason; by which yet the heathens had some, though obscure, notices of the rewards and punishments of another life: but we, beside them, have Christ and his apostles, who have given us much clearer and brighter revelations of these truths than they had, and 'have brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.' 2 Tim. i. 10. 'He hath shewed, O man, (saith the prophet,) what is good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee; namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' Mich. vi. 8. So that he hath not been wanting to us in delivering his mind and our duty to us, having plainly shewed us both our work and our wages. And therefore,—

2dly, It is manifestly our duty to receive and hearken to what God hath already told us, without seeking or desiring any new revelations. 'They have Moses and the prophets, (saith Abraham,) let them hear them;' and we have Christ and his apostles, let us much more hear and attend to them. Now, by hearing of both, is here meant,—

(1.) A thorough and steadfast belief of what they have delivered to us. For it is not the bare hearing or the outward professing of it, that Abraham here speaks of; but it is to have our understandings thoroughly convinced of the truth of it, and to have this belief firmly rooted and settled in our minds. The Jews heard Christ and his apostles expounding Moses and the prophets to them, but it had no effect upon them, because they believed it not. So the author to the Hebrews tells us, that 'the word preached profited not, because it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.' And there are many still who are not so thoroughly persuaded of Divine truths as they ought: and therefore,—

(2.) To hear Moses and the prophets, and other present revelations, is not only to believe, but seriously to consider and to be directed by them: and they that are so, will soon find that there will be no need or use of any other.

And this is the last thing here to be briefly spoken to, viz., that if we are not convinced by the ordinary standing revelations of God's word, we shall not be persuaded by one that comes from the dead. Some are apt to think, that a messenger from the dead would work more upon them, than all the books and exhortations of the living; and that, because such a messenger would give them the certainty of another life, of which they cannot be otherwise so well persuaded.

Again, one coming from hell would testify the truth of such a place, and the torments thereof.

Moreover, one coming from Abraham's bosom, may certify us of the rest and happiness of such a place.

But that all these things are otherwise, appears, first, because this experiment hath been already tried without effect; for Christ the Son of God rose from the grave, and came from the dead, to confirm his doctrine, and to acquaint us with the affairs of the other world, and yet the Jews would neither receive or believe in him.

Beside, the coming of any from the dead, is no likely or proper means of giving any satisfaction; for this is a way liable to great doubts and uncertainties, and many have been imposed upon by tales of ghosts and apparitions.

Again, the coming of any from the dead is more apt to terrify and affright, than to convince any. When our Saviour first appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, it is said they were terrified and affrighted, as if they had seen a spirit; and that put him to as much pains to satisfy them of the reality of his person, as of the truth of his doctrine. Beside, men may and will easily find shifts and evasions to mar the force of such arguments. Add to this, that God hath no where promised to send any from the dead upon such an errand, nor willed us to trust or hearken to them, and much less to desire or expect these expresses. In a word, a settled standing revelation is of more certainty and better use, than any such messages from the dead; the former being well confirmed to us by miracles and a voice from heaven, the latter liable to all the cheats and impostures of hell. And therefore, let us rest satisfied and contented with the revelations that God hath given us in the holy Scriptures, and make a right use of them; and then there will be no need of any other to guide us into truth, and to bring us to heaven.

DISCOURSE CCIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 JOHN iii. 13, to the end. — *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death; whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer,* &c.

THE collect for this day minds us of the never-failing care of God Almighty, to help and govern them whom he brings up in his steadfast fear and love; and thence beseeches him to keep us under the protection of his good providence, and to make us have a perpetual fear and love of his holy name.

To which end the beloved disciple, in the epistle for this day, first warns all good Christians of the hatred and malice of the world against them; after which, he shews the blessed fruits of a true love to the brethren, together with the mischievous effects of hatred and ill-will towards them; concluding with some marks and directions for the satisfying and assuring our consciences in these matters.

The epistle begins with a caution to good Christians to expect, and to arm themselves against, the hatred of the world, in these words: 'Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.' The occasion of this warning was, from what was said in the foregoing verse, of Cain's killing his brother Abel; and that for no other reason, but 'because his own works were evil, and his brother's good;' for which reason he bids them not to wonder, or be surprised, if the same lot befell them from the like persons. The world bears such ill-will to good men, that it is no marvel if they meet with hatred and hard usage from them; for 'as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.' Gal. iv. 29. There is that opposition and contrariety between virtue and vice, that they cannot well accord or consist together; for 'what fellowship (saith the apostle) hath light with darkness? or what concord hath Christ with Belial?' And therefore Christ told his disciples, 'If the world hate you, know that it hated me before it hated you; if ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' John xv. 18, 19. And elsewhere, at his sending them forth, he declared, that he sent them forth as sheep among wolves; meaning, that the world would bear the same enmity and hatred to them, and likewise have the same designs upon them, as the ravenous wolf hath upon the innocent sheep, namely, to divide and devour them. And therefore St. Peter warns Christians not to 'think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as if some new and strange thing had happened unto them,' 1 Pet. iv. 12; for the wicked world would malign and persecute

them. This is the common lot of the righteous here, to try their patience and constancy; and therefore we may not wonder at it, but rather look for and provide against it.

Now, the beloved disciple, having thus warned and fore-armed us against the hatred of the world, proceeds to shew the great benefit that will accrue to us from loving one another; for it is a mark of our regeneration, and gives us to understand that we are entered upon a new and spiritual life: 'We know (saith he) that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.' He that finds or feels this loving and charitable disposition towards his neighbour, hath the seeds of grace sown in his heart, which will quicken him to a spiritual life of grace here, and that will shortly grow up into an eternal life of glory hereafter: whereas, 'he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death;' he is void of all spiritual life, and remains still dead in trespasses and sins. This he confirms in the next words; for 'whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer; and we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.' He that hateth his brother, conceives mischief against him in his heart, which, when opportunity offers, is ready to break forth in slaughter and bloodshed; so it did with Cain, whose hatred and envy led him on to slay his brother Abel. Hence our Saviour, in Matt. v., interprets the hating of another to be the killing of him, because it is so in the intention of the heart, did not some outward curb restrain him from it; and he that harbours such mischievous and murderous intentions or desires, can have nothing of the temper of a good Christian, and much less any spiritual life abiding in him; for he that truly loves another, will rather lay down his own life for him, than take away his; so Christ manifested his love to us, and would have us do in like manner: 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' Christ loved us even to death, which he yielded to for our sakes; and he hath required us, if need be, to venture our lives for one another.

But how contrary to this is the practice of such, who are so far from laying down their lives for the brethren, that they will scarce lay out any of their superfluous substance to save their lives, or support them under their necessities! such as these can have nothing of the love of God or their brother rooted in them. So St. John's question here plainly intimates: 'Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' He that is so sparing of a little part of his substance to help his brother in time of need, will be much more sparing of his blood to serve him; both which are apparent proofs of his want of any true love to God or his neighbour: and therefore the apostle exhorts, in the next words, to give better demonstrations of our love to both, saying, 'My little children, let us not

love in word, or in tongue only, but in deed and truth.' True love consists not in talking or boasting with the mouth, but in the good wishes of the heart, and the bounty of the hand: it lies not in compliments, or in the outward flourish of words, but in actions, and the visible performance of good works, without which all is no better than hypocrisy and dissimulation. Judas could say, 'Hail, Master!' and kiss our Saviour, when he was just about to betray him; and much like this are the friendships of the world, who are never more forward to say 'Your humble servant,' than when they design most evil, and are just ready to overreach or undermine their neighbour. St. James puts the case, 'If a brother or sister be naked, or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto him, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled, and notwithstanding give him not what is needful for the body; what doth it profit?' James ii. 15, 16. Such good words afford no profit to them to whom they are given, nor will they afford any more to him that gives them; and therefore our love must sink deeper than the tongue; it must be rooted in the heart, and from thence spring up and appear in the good fruits of beneficence and charity; for 'hereby (saith our apostle) we shall know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him;' meaning, that we shall hereby approve ourselves to be true and sincere Christians, such as we profess ourselves to be, and no hypocrites, who are wont to give good words and fair speeches, but falsify in their deeds and actions; whereas, when our words and deeds go together, we shall shew the truth of our profession, and approve ourselves not only unto men, who can judge only by the outward appearance, but unto God, who knoweth the heart, and will judge us by the inward inclinations and intentions of it.

Now, from hence our apostle takes occasion to set forth,—

First, The great evil and danger of an accusing conscience in this matter, in these words: 'If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.' And,—

Secondly, The great benefit and comfort of an absolving conscience, in the following words: 'Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Both which being of great use and importance to us, will deserve to be particularly considered. And,—

First, Of the evil and danger of an accusing conscience: 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things;' where it is supposed, that the heart or conscience of a man may, and often does, accuse him for the lack of that love to God and his neighbour, which he ought to bear and shew to both. Thus, for example, when a man wilfully omits his duty to God, by neglecting his prayers, or turning his back upon his word and sacraments, or when he wilfully commits what God hath forbidden him, by profaning his name, or

polluting his Sabbath; conscience must and will take him aside, and rate him soundly by himself.

Again, when a man violates his duty to his neighbour by acts of fraud, rapine, oppression, or uncharitableness, his heart will secretly smite and reprehend him for these things; and though he may escape any earthly tribunal, yet conscience, as God's deputy, will arraign and sit in judgment upon him, yea and condemn and pass sentence upon him for such enormities, how secretly or cunningly soever they have been acted or concealed by him. This is so well known and felt, too, by the vilest and boldest offenders, that it needs no other proof than the retiring into their own breasts, and consulting their own experience in these matters. Judas found it to his own ruin for betraying his Saviour, and others have found the same for shedding innocent blood; yea, the most profligate sinners have not been able to escape these sharp girds and twitches of a galled and guilty mind.

But the present anguish of a guilty conscience is nothing to the future vengeance that attends it; for 'if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things:' he is greater in knowledge, and knows more by us than we do by ourselves; he is greater in power, and can do more to punish than we can; he is greater in justice, and will be more impartial than our hearts will be to us. There are many failures of duty, both to God and man, that often escape our own observation, and so give us little or no trouble, which yet are recorded in the book of God's remembrance, and must be accounted for; there are many vain thoughts, rash words, and unadvised actions that pass away unregarded, which yet are perfectly known to God, and will come into the reckoning of the last day: so that if our own hearts condemn us for that which we know by ourselves, God will surely condemn us, who knoweth much more; our hearts may condemn us for things that fall not under the cognizance of any earthly tribunal; for 'who knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him?' 1 Cor. ii. 11. But God will condemn us for things that slip the censure and condemnation of our own hearts, and will arraign us at his tribunal, for matters that escape not only earthly courts, but the bar of our own conscience.

Indeed, where conscience condemns, there God will condemn also, because God and conscience judge by the same rule; and conscience being God's vicegerent, to judge for and under him, he will approve the proceedings, and confirm the sentence of our own hearts.

But though God always condemns where conscience does, yet he sometimes goes farther, and condemns where that doth not: for his is a higher court, that searches deeper into matters than any earthly powers can; yea, to this all principalities and powers submit, and from this there lies no appeal.

In short, God Almighty, the great Judge of all the earth, will ratify the sentence of his deputy; and where our hearts condemn us for any known breaches of his laws, there he will do the same; but he being greater than our hearts, and knowing more, where conscience is either ignorant or silent, he will add to and carry the condemnation higher: which shews the misery of a misgiving and self-condemning heart, and may teach us, with St. Paul, to exercise ourselves herein, to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and man. And this will lead me, in the next place, to consider,—

Secondly, The comfort and happiness of a clear and absolving conscience, from these words; 'Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God:' where a good conscience is described by the heart's not condemning us; which can only be from a consciousness of our own innocence, or a freedom from any guilt. When we cannot charge ourselves with the wilful violation of God's laws, but can reflect upon our ways without remorse, and our minds approve and acquit us for what we have done; then are we said to have an absolving, clear, and good conscience.

But who can say, 'his heart is clean, I am free from sin?' Does not the 'righteous man fall several times a day?' And if we think or say that we have no sin, 'we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:' how then can our hearts forbear to condemn us for such frequent and daily miscarriages?

In answer to this, it is true, that no man liveth and sinneth not; and should conscience proceed upon the strict rules of justice, and pronounce sentence accordingly, there is no man's heart but must condemn him: for the best of men have reason to confess daily, (as the Church directs,) 'that they have left undone things which they ought to have done; and have done things which they ought not to have done:' and if our Judge should be extreme to mark all that is done amiss, who could abide it? None could stand the trial of conscience here, or abide the severer trial of God hereafter. But for our comfort, we may know,—

That neither God nor conscience do or will judge us by the strict rules of justice, but proceed herein by the measures of mercy, and the milder terms of the gospel, by which no involuntary failings can ever hurt us, and greater offences, if repented of and amended, shall never be laid to our charge; for 'there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' If we avoid the solicitation of sensual lusts, and give up ourselves to the conduct of God's Holy Spirit, our hearts will not condemn us, and much less will God, the searcher of hearts, suffer us to come into condemnation. Holy Job declares, that by 'holding fast his integrity, his heart should not reproach him as long as he lived.' Job xxvii. 5, 6. Neither will our hearts condemn us, whilst we faithfully discharge our duty to the utmost of our power. And this, our

apostle here tells us, will give us 'confidence towards God; that is, it gives us reasonable grounds of hope or assurance, that God will not lay any thing to our charge, but will acquit us at the last and great day; which may abundantly convince us of the vast benefit and comfort of a good conscience.

The word here rendered 'confidence toward God,' is in the original παῤῥησία, which signifies freedom of access, or boldness of speech; and gives us to understand, that a heart set right towards God, and that cannot lay any great matter to our charge, may encourage us to draw nigh to him with the confidence of children to their heavenly Father, and to come boldly to the throne of grace, for grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 16.

Being well assured (as St. John here tells us,) that 'whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight;' meaning, that God will certainly hear our prayers, and give us whatever we ask agreeable to his will, and suitable to our necessities: for by keeping his commandments we please him, and while we do so, he hath obliged himself by promise to hear and help us. So that if we are conscious of the sincerity and singleness of our heart, whatever failings we may have, we may draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith, having this confidence, that in whatsoever we ask, he will hear us.

And the commandments he requires us to keep to this end, are believing in Christ, and loving one another; so the next words declare, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' These are the principal acts of obedience that he exacts from us, namely, to hold fast our profession of faith in Christ, and to perform the duties we owe to our brethren, as Christ hath taught and commanded us.

And to confirm us in this confidence towards God, he adds what he had before often told us, that 'he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him;' that is, he is in a manner ingrafted and incorporated into Christ, as the branches are in the vine; and receives the influences of grace from him, as the members do from the head, being united to him by the bond of love and charity. And that we may not want a mark to try ourselves by, the apostle adds in the close, 'Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit, which he hath given us:' this is the seal whereby the Lord knoweth who are his; it is the touchstone to try our sincerity, and to discern whether we belong to him. God resideth with his Holy Spirit, and if we feel the blessed fruits and graces of it within us, we may safely conclude, that God abideth in us, and we in him.

This is the substance of this day's epistle; from which we may learn,

1st, Not to be surprised or dejected at the hatred or malice of the world. Our apostle bids us 'not to marvel,' or be troubled

at it; for the hatred of the world is rather a sign of the love of God, than any mark of his displeasure: 'The friendship of the world is enmity with God;' and 'if we love the world,' or have the love of it, 'the love of the Father is not in us.' Our best wisdom is to secure as much as possible the love of God, and then to overlook and despise the hatred of men; for 'greater is he (saith the apostle) that is in us, than he that is in the world.'

2dly, To secure to us the love of God, let us cherish a true and unfeigned love to the brethren. This is the way here and elsewhere prescribed to that end: he that loves his brother is passed from death to life, but he that hateth him abideth in death; yea, St. John here tells us, that 'he that hateth his brother is a murderer:' he beareth that rancour and malice in his heart, that, when opportunity offers, is apt to break out in mischief and slaughter, and we know that no such one hath any spiritual or eternal life abiding in him; which should teach us to empty our hearts of all such black passions, and to harbour nothing but kindness and charity.

3dly, Let us so fix our minds in the love of God and our neighbour, that our hearts may not condemn us for lack of either; for if our hearts condemn us, God, who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things, will ratify the sentence, and condemn us much more.

4thly, Let us labour for a calm, clear, and absolving conscience, and that will give us confidence towards God; it will give us confidence in our prayers, and make us go boldly to him for a supply of what we want, and a blessing upon what we do. In a word, that our hearts may not condemn us, let us abandon all base and unworthy things, and keep steady to the immutable rules of honesty and virtue; so shall we have the testimony of a good conscience, which will be the best cordial at the hour of death, and the best friend at the day of judgment.

DISCOURSE CCV.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xiv. 16—25.—*A certain man made a great supper, and bade many, and sent his servant at supper-time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready; and they all, with one consent, began to make excuse,* &c.

IN this gospel our blessed Saviour, according to his usual way of instructing the people, sets forth, in a parable, the liberal provisions he hath made in the gospel for all that will come to him; as also the way and manner of his inviting them; together with the danger of refusing his invitations: of each of which particularly.

The gospel and the parable too begin thus: 'A certain man made a great supper, and bade many.' This certain man is, by by St. Matthew, in reciting the same parable, said to be a certain

king. Chap. xxii. 2. This great supper here is, by the other evangelists, said to be a great feast made at the marriage of his son, which is wont to be sumptuous and magnificent: both which signify to us the ample and glorious entertainment that God the Father hath made and offered to us by his Son; and that not only in the general provisions of the whole gospel, but more particularly in the heavenly feast of the holy eucharist: wherein he gives us not the common and ordinary bread of the earth, but 'bread from heaven, the bread of life,' which alone can feed our souls to life eternal. He presents us with dainties far above the quails and manna of the Israelites; yea, above angels' food, even the body and blood of his dear Son, as a token of his love, and the means of our reconciliation: which great things affording both plenty and pleasure, are here represented by a supper or marriage-feast, an entertainment commonly attended with great joy and many endearments.

To this great feast or supper the parable adds, 'He bade many;' which signifies that general and generous invitation or offer of all the mercies of the gospel to all that will receive and accept of them. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth (saith the prophet), come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.' Isa. lv. 1. This was a prophecy or promise of those gracious tenders of mercy and salvation, that should be made by the Messias in the latter days, which should be free to all that would come upon his kind invitation. The call is earnest, and repeated several times, being bidden to come three times in one verse; and lest any should keep back for their poverty and meanness, he bids them come buy and eat bread without money, and likewise to come buy and drink wine without price. Their hunger and thirst were the main qualifications looked for, and their hearty acceptance was all the price that was expected.

Accordingly we find this gracious promise and prophecy fulfilled by our blessed Saviour in his free and frequent calls upon sinners to come to him, and to accept of life and salvation from him: 'Come unto me (saith he) all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Matt. xii. 29. Yea, we find him claming and bewailing the folly of such as refuse it, saying with some trouble and concern, 'You will not come unto me, that ye may have life;' with many other expostulations to the same purpose: all which shew us the infinite love of Christ to mankind, in providing such great and good things for them, and likewise in so earnestly and importunately inviting us to accept of them.

But who are the messengers employed to bid the guests to this great supper? Why, St. Luke here makes mention of but one servant, but St. Matthew of more. By the sending of one servant here, may perhaps be meant God the Father's sending his Son with the offers of grace and mercy: by the sending of more servants, mentioned by St. Matthew, may be meant Christ's

sending his apostles and ministers upon the same errand; who, as ambassadors in Christ's stead, beseech us, in his name, to partake of the feast of fat things prepared for them.

The words of the invitation to them that were bidden are, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' St. Matthew adds, 'Behold, the oxen and the fatlings are killed, and all things are ready, come unto the marriage:' meaning, that the sacrifice is slain, the feast is prepared, and the table is decked with all kind of provisions; so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down: and therefore hasten away, and defer not to come, being so lovingly called and bidden by God himself; for your company is expected, and you may be well assured of a hearty welcome to your Lord's table.

But what answer did the guests return to so kind an invitation? Why, the answer in St. Matthew was, that 'they would not come.' A rude and ungrateful answer indeed! for who could have thought that so great love and kindness should be so unworthily requited, or so unthankfully rejected? especially considering the great honour of feasting with the Son of God, the unspeakable pleasure and delight that must be found in such company, together with the infinite benefit and comfort that attend so heavenly an entertainment: all which, if duly weighed, will afford motives and encouragements enough to a cheerful and thankful acceptance. Whereas such a rude refusal of the divine favours must necessarily incense, and so great an indignity justly raise the greatest indignation. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? (saith our church in the Exhortation to the Communion,) who would not resent this as a great injury and unkindness done to him? And is not the affront much greater when done to God, than when it is done to men? And will he (think you) take that at our hands, which we are not willing to take from one another? These are things worthy to be seriously thought of and considered by all wilful absenters from, and contemners of the Lord's table.

But the answer of the guests here in St. Luke seems to be a little more modest and mannerly; for they do not make so light of the invitation, as flatly to deny coming, but offer at some excuses for their not coming and accepting of it; for, it is said, 'They all with one consent began to make excuse;' which yet were so slender and frivolous, as in effect to be no better than a downright refusal, as may be easily seen by considering of them.

'The first said, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.' A feigned and frivolous excuse, and no doubt a false one too; for who is so foolish as to buy a piece of ground without seeing it? Do not men take a strict view and survey of land before they use to purchase it? And may not he be justly reckoned a fool that does otherwise? Is it a wise bargain, for the buying a little piece of ground for a few years, to sell an everlasting inheritance?

and for a small spot of earth, to part with a kingdom in heaven? What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? And if the whole world can be no recompense or exchange for the soul, sure to lose it for a little piece of ground, an inconsiderable part of it, must be a bargain infinitely more fatal and foolish; so that this must be acknowledged to be a very slender and trifling excuse.

A second said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.' An excuse no less frivolous than the former; for was there no other time for the trying of his oxen, than when his lord's oxen and fatlings were killed on purpose to entertain him? Is the proving of our cattle of greater consequence than the approving of ourselves to our great God and Master? Ought not the attractives of his love, and our duty, to draw stronger than a yoke of oxen? Are beasts to be minded before and above our Saviour? and is Christ's yoke of less consideration than a yoke of oxen? Alas! at how low a rate do such men value the blood of Christ, who set the blood of bulls and heifers above it? And when God saith, 'All the beasts of the forest are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills,' is it not absurd to prefer the care of oxen before the Owner? so that this, too, is a very weak and silly excuse.

A third said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' This was a more foolish and frivolous excuse than all the rest; for (as one hath wittily enough observed) he might have brought his wife along with him, and been the more welcome; and, being a marriage-feast, to which they were invited, none could have been more proper and welcome guests than a new-married couple, who, being a little before married to one another, might by this means marry both their souls to Christ, and thereby live the more happily and comfortably together; it being a much better way of uniting their affections, to go together to this feast of love and charity in the house of God, than to withdraw from each other into the places of discord and dissension.

These are the vain and frivolous pretences mentioned in the gospel, for absenting from the Lord's Supper. St. Matthew expresses them by going 'one to his farm, and another to his merchandise,' things of infinitely less concern than those to which they are so graciously invited; and therefore, we may well think how little such feigned excuses will avail before God; as appears by the next words of the parable: 'So that servant came and shewed his lord these things.' At which 'the master of the house' is said to be exceeding 'angry;' and well he might, for their baseness and ingratitude in rejecting the tenders of his mercy and goodness upon such slight and trifling pretences; for who, that had provided a rich and costly banquet, and spread his table with all manner of varieties, would not be highly offended with such unthankful guests, as refuse to come and partake of

them upon so free and kind an invitation? Will slight excuses pass with you upon such occasions? How, then, can we think that God will take them at our hands? Why, that himself declares in this gospel, that none of them that were 'bidden shall taste of my supper.' None can endure to have his favours despised; and therefore God here strikes such wilful contemners of his grace out of the list of his friends, and resolves not to invite them any more, but to give them up to a reprobate sense, having no feeling of God's love, nor relish of divine things.

Now this expositors generally understand of God's utter rejecting of the Jews, for their great perverseness and infidelity: for though they were once his peculiar people, dignified above all others by many high and noble privileges; though the covenant, the giving of the law, and the promises, were all theirs, yea, though the Messias came from them, and was first sent to them; yet, because they thrust salvation from them, and obstinately rejected all the offers of mercy and pardon made to them, God also rejected them, and left them to the blindness and perverseness of their own minds; in which unhappy state they remain to this day. This is represented here by a sumptuous supper or entertainment made for them, and many earnest and importunate invitations made to them; God sending his prophets and messengers from time to time to woo and entreat them to come in and accept salvation from him; but their frequent and frivolous excuses, and, at last, their final rejecting of all that could be said or done for them, provoked God utterly to cast them off, and to call in other persons of meaner quality and circumstances to him.

So we here read, that 'the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.' This is generally interpreted of the calling in of the Gentiles, who were before but forlorn persons and castaways, excluded from all the privileges of the temple, and destitute of all hopes of favour: 'Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise;' as the apostle describes them. These, upon the rejection of the Jews, were received into mercy, and made partakers of the manifold grace of God. So Paul and Barnabas told the Jews, 'It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo! we turn to the Gentiles: for so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation to the ends of the earth.' Acts xiii. 46, 47. Christ himself foretold that the children of the kingdom, meaning the Jews, should be cast out, and that the Gentiles should be received in their room, according to that promise and prediction, Psalm ii. 8, 'I will

give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;' which promise was here parabolically expressed and fulfilled in the master of the feast's laying aside the Jews, who refused the grace of the gospel, and commanding his servant to go into the streets and lanes of the city, where the Gentiles were wont to walk forlorn and destitute, and to bring in those who in respect of the Jews were 'poor' in substance, 'maimed' in body, 'halt' in their feet, and 'blind' in their eyes; that is, labouring under great infirmities and distresses both in body, mind, and estate. These he ordered to be brought in to this gospel-feast, and for accepting of it he healed all their infirmities of body and mind; for we read that 'the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the lepers were cleansed, and the poor had the gospel preached unto them.' Matt. xi. 5.

When this was done according to order, the servant goes to his master again, and 'said unto him, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room;' meaning, that the plenty of the provision was such, as might well serve a greater company, and that his grace was sufficient for all. Whereupon the Lord sends his servant again, and bids him 'go out into the highways and hedges,' and to fetch in all the stragglers and outliers, 'that his house may be filled;' shewing, that his house is free to all comers, that none are excluded for their meanness and poverty, but all are invited, rich and poor, base and honourable, all may come, and find a true welcome; for God is 'not willing that any should perish,' but 'that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.' 1 Tim. ii. 4.

But, because some men's backwardness may be such as to need a spur, and to require a little awakening, our Saviour here adds, with respect to such, 'compel them to come in.' What may be the import of that command, what this compulsion is, and how far it is to be used in such cases, may be worth our while a little to consider. To which end, we may take notice of a twofold compulsion,—the one by persuasion, the other by penalties; both which may be useful in many cases, and in some necessary.

For the first, there is a sort of violence in the arts and methods of persuasion, and many are drawn to believe and do many things by the mere force of reason: this ofttimes overpowers the mind, and by an invisible and invincible influence carries it captive to the obedience of faith. Words sometimes pierce deeper than the sword, and gain that point by persuasion, which no outward force or compulsion could obtain. St. Stephen's adversaries 'could not resist the wisdom and spirit with which he spake.' St. Peter's hearers were, by the sharpness of his discourse, 'pricked at the heart, and said unto him, What shall we do?' In this sense, to 'compel them to come in,' is by the force of arguments to draw them unto Christ, and by the arts of persuasion to constrain them to come to him.

But where these cannot prevail, (as with the ignorant and obstinate they can do little,) there they may be driven by laws and punishments. Children may be made to learn by the rod, and the backwardness of men may be chastised and quickened by good laws. It is no prejudice to any to be compelled to their duty, to restrain their wanderings, and to keep them in the right way; whereas multitudes are undone by liberty and indulgence. To suppress schism and vice by censures, and the sanctions of human laws, hath been ever used in the christian church; and it is both a safe, proper, and wise course, to awaken and reclaim offenders by moderate penalties: 'Compel them to come in, (saith our Saviour,) that my house may be filled.' Christ loves to see a full table, and delights to have his house furnished with guests. But then care must be taken, to fit and prepare ourselves for this holy feast, to have on our wedding-garment, that we may be welcome guests to this marriage-supper; for holy things may not be given to dogs. And what our Saviour here said to the obstinate Jews, he saith to all impenitent sinners: 'None of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.'

This is the sum of this day's gospel; which may teach us,—

1. To magnify and adore the infinite love and condescension of Christ, in making such ample provisions for us, and so graciously inviting his worthless creatures to them. The plenty and costliness of his provisions, is represented by the 'killing of his oxen and fatlings,' the best of his cattle, and the choicest of his herds and flocks. The freedom and kindness of his invitation is expressed by his 'bidding of many;' indeed, all that by a due preparation of themselves will come and accept of it: he calls both 'Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free; for they are all one in Christ Jesus.' By which he shews himself to be 'no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.' This is a mercy too great to be expressed, indeed, too great to be expected, had not God of his undeserved goodness vouchsafed to bestow it; and is, therefore, to be owned and accepted with all thankfulness.

2. From the many excuses made by the guests for their not accepting of this supper, we may learn the natural backwardness and averseness of mankind to their own good. Though they were here invited to a highly honourable and beneficial entertainment, yet every slight pretence was thought sufficient to keep them from it, and no entreaty could prevail with them for their own happiness. Indeed, the matters alleged by them were in themselves lawful and innocent: their buying and seeing a farm, their providing and proving of oxen, their espousing and enjoying a wife, were things in their due time and place very allowable; but the fault was, the preferring these trifling and perishing matters of the world, above the weightier things of heaven, and

the great affairs of eternity: their minding a farm above the kingdom of heaven, their taking greater care of oxen than their own souls, and their loving father and mother, husband and wife, more than Christ; which they that do, are not worthy of him.

3. From the master of the feast's great displeasure at these things, we may learn the danger as well as vanity of all such excuses: he was so wroth with them, as to threaten that they should not taste of his supper; they should neither feed at his table here, nor feast with him hereafter. But it is to be feared there are some in our days, that abstain from this feast upon worse excuses than these; they are loath to come, because they are unwilling to leave their sins, and amend their lives, or be obliged to such a strictness as the holy sacrament requires. But if those more innocent excuses in the gospel were not accepted, with what indignation, think you, will those viler pretences be rejected! Wherefore, in the last place, let us lay aside all manner of excuses, and make ourselves ready to go to the Lord's Supper; and so, by accepting of grace now, we shall ere long be advanced to glory.

DISCOURSE CCVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 PETER v. 5—12. — *All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time,* &c.

THE collect for this day beseeches God mercifully to hear our prayers; that we, to whom he hath given a hearty desire to pray, may by his mighty aid be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities. Now, because pride and haughtiness of spirit is the greatest obstacle to the success of our prayers, and to our security from dangers; and nothing conduces more to a good event and issue in both, than humility and lowliness of mind; therefore,—

The epistle for this day cautions us against the one, and earnestly exhorts to the other. To which end, it begins,—

First, With a general exhortation to mutual subjection and condescension to each other, in these words, 'All of you be subject one to another.' There is a more particular subjection due from inferiors to superiors, which consists in honouring their persons, and obeying their laws; and this is frequently required in holy Scripture: 'Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,' saith St. Paul, Rom. xiii. 1: and, 'put them in mind, (saith he to Titus,) to be subject to principalities and powers, and to obey magistrates,' Tit. ii. 1. 'Wherefore ye must needs

be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake,' Rom. xiii. 8; with many other places to the same purpose. This subjection is to be paid only to princes, and other magistrates commissioned by them, whom God hath invested with his own power to rule and govern those committed to their charge.

But there is another and more general kind of subjection, that concerns all men, superiors, inferiors, and equals; who are all required, in some sense, to be subject one to another: the younger are to submit to the elder, and the elder are to direct, counsel, and assist the younger; and men of all ranks and stations are to condescend to good offices, and be helpful one to another: there is none so high, but may and ought to stoop for the good of those beneath him; and there is none so low, but may be serviceable to those above them. There is that mutual dependence of each of these upon the other, that neither of them can say, 'I have no need of thee;' for they all stand in continual need of help and assistance from one another; and therefore all of them ought to be so far subject, as to be ready to all good offices for one another. Of this Christ himself hath given us an example; for though he were Lord of all, yet he took upon him the form of a servant, and stooped so low as to wash his disciples' feet, merely to teach us to do likewise. There are some, and those many times of very mean rise and rank, that affect more power, and assume to themselves more honour, than belongs to them; they would fain be seen and thought to be somebody, which makes them ofttimes busy-bodies in other men's matters, and meddlers in things which they neither understand, nor appertain to them: as if they had all wisdom, and none had wit enough to do their own business without their advice. Such as these are so far from being subject, that they would top their superiors, thinking themselves wiser than their teachers or governors; and so take upon them to nose and control their betters. To these especially the apostle gives this caution, 'all of you be subject one to another;' that is, instead of aspiring or usurping power over others, let each of you esteem others better than yourselves, and rather put yourselves under, than lift yourselves above them. Our blessed Saviour, finding some of his disciples contending for pre-eminence, and striving who amongst them should be greatest, sharply rebuked their vanity, saying, 'He that would be greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve;' adding, that he himself was among them as one that serveth. Luke xxii. 26, 27. Now,—

This subjection of one to another, is by St. Peter here explained and expressed by humility: 'All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility.' Where it will be requisite to shew what this humility is, what it is to be clothed with humility, and likewise what influence it hath in making men subject one to another.

For the first, humility is a virtue, that consists not in wearing old clothes, or in any affected garbs of austerity or mortification; for a beggar may be prouder in his rags, than a good Christian in finer and more fashionable attire; but humility lies in the heart, and consists in such a low and mean opinion of ourselves, as keeps us from overvaluing of ourselves, or undervaluing of others.

There is, indeed, a branch of humility that respects our carriage towards God; and that consists in such a deep sense of our own vileness, compared with the infinite greatness of God, as makes us to abhor ourselves, and adore our Maker.

But the humility we are here exhorted to respects our carriage towards men, and lies in subduing all those vain and high thoughts of ourselves, as cause us to overlook and neglect our duty to others: and so it is opposed to pride, or such an overweening conceit of ourselves, as is apt to lift men up, and makes them to despise others, though many times better than themselves. Whereas humility consists in having low and mean thoughts of ourselves, and being content that others should have the same of us; not arrogantly assuming honour to ourselves, but in honour preferring one another.

But what is it to be clothed with humility? The word in the original is ἐγκομβοσάσθε, which signifies the putting on of a coat or garment peculiar to servants, by wearing whereof, as by a livery, they were distinguished from others, and known to whom they belonged. The expression gives us to understand, that humility is the badge or cognizance of a good Christian; and to be clothed with it, is to wear Christ's livery, and to be known to be his disciples; for he himself was 'meek and lowly in heart,' Matt. xi. 28; and would 'have the same mind to be in us, as was in him, to stoop even to the form of a servant.' Phil. ii. In token whereof, we are to put on humility as a mark of Christ's followers, and that too not as a loose garment, that may be put off again, and laid aside at pleasure; but so to be clothed with it, as never to change, or be unclothed again: for humility is a garment, which though it may look bare or coarse, yet will never wear out, or be out of fashion; for no garb is so becoming, or renders us more amiable in the sight of God or man. It is, indeed, the best of all garments, for it will keep us warm in all times and conditions; it is not only clothing, to guard us from cold and nakedness, but like a coat of mail defends us from all assaults of our enemies. In a word,—

Humility is a garment that answers all the necessities, and secures from all the dangers of the soul: it is an ornament in fair weather, and a safeguard in foul; for it adorns prosperity, and succours in adversity. It enamels other virtues, and, like charity, covers a multitude of sins. And therefore, above all things we should be clothed with humility; or, as the word signifies, be so girt about with it, as never to part with, or depart from it.

But what influence hath this virtue in making men subject one to another? Why, much every way; for as pride lifts men up in their thoughts above others, and so they come to despise and look down with contempt upon those they think beneath them, by which it occasions great disorder and disturbance in the world; so humility, on the other hand, makes men low in their own eyes, by which they become yielding and condescending to another, and so hush up many quarrels and contentions. Solomon tells us, that it is 'the proud heart that stirreth up strife, and only by pride cometh contention:' whereas humility leads to peace, and puts men upon the study of quiet, by doing their own business, without meddling or interposing in the affairs of others. It keeps down the swelling and imposthumation of the mind, whereby men become troublesome to themselves and others: it will not suffer men to 'think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the measure of faith;' which tends mightily to the quiet, safety, and order of the world. In short, this grace will render men true lovers, friends, and servants of mankind; and, instead of being lifted up, will make them subject one to another: which should teach us to wear this badge, and, above all other garments, to be clothed with humility. And that because, as St. Peter adds in the next words,—

'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.' The proud heart resisteth God, and, like Lucifer, sets itself against the Most High: 'The ungodly is so proud, (saith the Psalmist,) that he careth not for God;' yea, that he despiseth him, and saith, 'Who is the Lord?' And this makes God the proud man's professed enemy, he hates and resists him: and how can any bear up against so mighty an adversary? Well might the wise man declare, that 'pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall,' Prov. xvi. 18; and ver. 5, 'Every one that is proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord; and though hand join in hand, yet shall they not go unpunished.' An instance hereof we have in Pharaoh, whose pride God Almighty resisted and chastised with sundry sorts of judgments. Nebuchadnezzar, too, for exalting himself above God, was degraded below the dignity of men, and was turned a-grazing among the beasts of the field. Herod, for assuming to himself the honour that was due to God only, was eaten up of worms; and none ever resisted God, but sorely smarted for it. And this may shew us both the folly and danger of pride; for if 'they who resist earthly powers shall receive to themselves damnation,' what dreadful punishments must attend them, who proudly resist the powers of heaven! But, though God resisteth the proud, yet,

'He giveth grace to the humble;' he sets himself against the one, and always appears for the other. He delights to shew mercy and favour to the humble; and none rise higher in the

opinion of God and man, than they that are lowest in their own; for God is pleased to dwell with the meek and lowly, and to take up his abode with the humble and contrite spirit: and sure they can want no grace or favour, or any good thing, where God himself vouchsafes to reside with his Holy Spirit.

'Humble yourselves, therefore, (saith our apostle,) under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.' Submit yourselves unto God, and those he hath set over you; and likewise be subject to one another in all humility, that ye may escape the resistance of the mighty hand of his power and justice, and receive the assistance that will be reached out to you by the hands of his mercy. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate, and then God in his due time will exalt and reward your humility; for pride is ever attended with a fall, and humility with rising: this being the first step that mounts to honour; it is the root and foundation of all other graces, and upon that alone may we safely build our hopes of glory.

But because you may meet with some difficulties and discouragements in the lower ground of humility; for where the stile is low (we say) every one is apt to go over: therefore the apostle, in the next words, wills you not to be dismayed, but to 'cast all your care upon God, who careth for you.' Some, indeed, may interpret your humility to be only a pusillanimity or baseness of mind, and miscall a humble person by the odious name of one of a low, mean, and abject spirit; and so he may be apt to be insulted, abused, and affronted by insolent and haughty men: but St. Peter here directs them not to be anxiously careful or concerned about such matters, but to refer all to the guidance and goodness of God, who will take a particular care of them, and not suffer any thing to befal them, but what may in the end tend to their welfare. Christ himself endured the reproaches and contradiction of sinners; the apostles went through good report and bad report, through honour and dishonour, and have told us of scoffers in the latter days, walking after their own lusts; and therefore we should not be troubled or discouraged at those things that have befallen the Son of God, and the best of men; especially considering, that all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and live by his laws.

Furthermore, because the devil, who fell by pride, is still tempting and drawing us into the same condemnation, therefore St. Peter, in the next verse, advises us to 'be sober and vigilant, because our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' Pride and ambition is supposed to be the first sin of the devil and his evil angels, and the occasion of their fall: for not being content with the high station wherein God had set them, but affecting to be equal with, or superior to the Most High, they were cast down from the blessed mansions of light and glory in which they were first seated, into the black abyss of eternal darkness: and though they are said to be 'reserved

in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day;' yet, by God's permission, the devil is here said to 'walk about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' That deadly adversary of ours is daily seeking all advantages to betray us: he watches what is most apt to affect and blow us up, and then plies us with temptations suitable to the vanity. Like a roaring lion, he seeks first to catch, and then to make us his prey; for which reason, to arm ourselves against him, St. Peter here exhorts us to 'be sober and vigilant,' that we may the better discover and defeat his designs. Where sobriety implies,—

1st, Moderation in the use of God's creatures; and so to be sober is to take heed that our hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, by which we lose the use of our reason, and the benefit of God's protection. Intemperance will easily betray us into the enemies' hands, for it deprives us of all power of resisting him; nor can we withstand any of his assaults, when we cannot stand our ground: which should teach us to have the use of reason and the succours of religion always ready; all which will be little enough to oppose so subtle and powerful a foe. Again,—

2dly, There is a sobriety of the mind that keeps it from swelling and pride; and so to be sober is not to think too highly of ourselves, but to think soberly, according as God hath given the measure of faith. There is a drunkenness of the mind as well as the body, both which we are industriously to avoid, and carefully to observe all the rules of sobriety, lest Satan get an advantage upon us, and being lifted up with pride, we fall into the snare and condemnation of the devil. To prevent which, the apostle would have us add hereunto the great duty of vigilance or watchfulness, 'Be sober, be vigilant;' to watch against the wiles of the devil, for he still lies in wait, and seeks all opportunities to surprise and circumvent us: which should set us always upon our guard, looking every way about us, and imploring the assistance of Divine grace to withstand the evil one, and having done all, to stand. To which end, the apostle directs us in the next words, to do our part; which is, 'To resist him steadfast in the faith;' and then we may be sure that God will not be wanting on his. 'Resist the devil (saith St. James), and he will flee from you.' James iv. 7. He will not, cannot stand, if you withstand him; for Christ hath broken his power, and vanquished his forces; and, by the power of his grace, hath made us more than conquerors over him; so that if you keep your ground you are sure to win the field, his temptations cannot hurt you without consenting and yielding to him; all your danger is from your own cowardice, and you must tamely surrender yourselves up to him before he can do you the least harm; which is encouragement enough to resist and defy him: only keep your courage, and continue steadfast in the faith, and he must and will flee from you. 'Above all things, (saith St. Paul,) take on the shield of faith, and that will

quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' Eph. vi. 16. A steadfast belief of the power and promises of God will repel all the assaults of the evil one: for 'this is the victory that overcometh both the devil and the world, even your faith.'

Neither let any of the troubles or trials of the world shake the constancy of your mind, or make you fall from your own steadfastness; 'Knowing, that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world:' meaning, that they were not the only sufferers in the world in this way, but they had partners enough among their own brethren; there was no affliction had befallen them, but what was common to others: for their brethren at Rome, and all other parts of the world, were sharers with them in the like sufferings, and he would not have them think it hard to taste of that bitter cup which others drink off; but to be content to bear a part in the common miseries and calamities of this life.

To enable them hereunto, our apostle, in the next words, falls to his prayers in their behalf, that God would give them grace and strength to bear up under whatever might befal them; saying, 'The God of all grace, who hath called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.' Where he makes a solemn address to Almighty God, the giver of all grace and goodness, who hath revealed and called us to a state of salvation by the sufferings of Christ, after some short conformity to him in his sufferings, to lead us on to perfection; and instead of being shaken by the troubles of this life, to be established and confirmed in the expectation of future glory, as the reward of them. For the hopes hereof he ascribes unto God all honour and praise, concluding with these words;' 'To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.' Amen.

This is a brief account of the epistle for this day: the great lessons we are taught by it are to shun pride, and to learn humility; to which end, we are to meditate this day upon the evil of the one, and the goodness of the other. As for the evil of pride, it was the first and great sin of the devil, and that which made him truly so; and if we may judge of the heinousness of the sin by the greatness of the punishment, we may conclude it to be out of measure sinful, for it cast the evil angels from heaven to hell; that is, from the top of the highest happiness, into the gulf of the deepest misery: and if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, let not any proud person think he shall go unpunished. Let none then be puffed up upon the account of any imaginary excellence he may have above others, for it is only lent to or deposited with him; and 'if thou hast received it (saith the apostle,) why boastest thou thyself, as if thou receivedst it not?' Do not then feed thy fancy with any thoughts of thine own worth, for that will make thee arrogate more to thyself than belongs to thee; but rather think more upon thy follies, thy faults,

and thy frailties, and that will lower thy spirits, and keep thee from swelling with pride and vanity. Moreover, never compare thyself with those that are beneath thee; for that may be apt to raise thy esteem of thyself, and make thee think more highly of thyself than thou oughtest to think: but if thou wilt make comparisons, let it always be with those that are above thee, that seeing how thou art excelled in all natural and moral excellencies, thou mayest come to think more soberly of thyself, and in honour prefer one another.

Lastly, Meditate on the goodness and gracefulness of humility; how amiable it appears in the eyes of God and man, and draws on it the favour of both. Pride is indeed hateful and odious to all persons; it leads men into many a heinous sin, and brings on many a heavy punishment: but humility is the parent of all virtue, and though it may seem to depress, yet it certainly leads to exaltation; 'for he that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.' Let us therefore strip ourselves of all pride and haughtiness of mind, which ever goes before a fall; and let us put on meekness and lowliness of heart, that we may be exalted in due time. To which end, let us watch against the temptations of the world and the devil, which are apt to swell us with pride and vanity, and earnestly pray to be clothed with humility, and to be found in the number of the poor in spirit, to whom belongs the kingdom of heaven. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xv. 1—11.—*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him: and the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable to them*, &c.

THE great fame of Christ's doctrine and miracles drew persons of all sorts and countries unto him. Among the rest we read here, that the 'publicans and sinners,' some of the worst of men, were in that number, and likewise 'drew near unto him.' The publicans were persons infamous, even to a proverb, and by their great oppressions and exactions upon the people, had rendered themselves vile and odious in the sight of God and man; and therefore we find them here, and often elsewhere, coupled with sinners, or persons of a loose and profligate conversation. However, these, among others, came and drew nigh to our Saviour; but upon what errand? Why, that we are here told was 'to hear him.' They had heard much of him, and of the great things that he spake and did, and now they had a great mind and desire to hear him themselves; either out of curiosity, as some think, it being usual to flock after new and much cried-up teachers; or out of

design, as others imagine, to ensnare and entrap him, to seek to get some advantage upon him, and to find what occasion they could against him; as some hear, not to learn, but to carp. Others again, and I think with greater probability, conceive that they drew nigh to hear him with better ends, namely, to learn their duty from him, and how to direct and amend their lives. They had seen what change had been made in Matthew their fellow-publican, how he had left his publican's stall to follow Christ, and become one of his disciples: they had heard likewise of Zaccheus, another publican, how he had restored fourfold, and for that reason Christ came to his house, and brought salvation with him. The noise of these and many other matters brought them to Jesus to know the truth, and to reap the fruit of his doctrine. To this end St. Matthew, whom our Saviour had lately called from the receipt of custom to be one of his followers, made a feast for him; to which he also invited many of the publicans and sinners, that by hearing his discourse, they might receive the same benefit, and become his disciples. Accordingly our Saviour came and sat down to meat in his house, and 'many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples; which, when the Pharisees saw, they began to take exception, asking the disciples, 'Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?' This account St. Matthew gives of this matter, Matt. ix. 10, 11. St. Luke here, to the same effect, tells us, that upon the publicans and sinners drawing near unto Christ to hear his discourse, 'the Pharisees and Scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.' The thing they here murmured at, was our Saviour's freedom of conversation with such bad men. The publicans, being the tribute-gatherers for the Roman emperors, were generally heathens and great oppressors, with whom it was forbidden by the Jewish law to eat or converse. The Pharisees therefore and Scribes, who were supercilious despisers of other men, took great offence at our Saviour's eating and conversing with them; telling his disciples that it was no way becoming so holy a person as their Master pretended to be, to converse so freely and familiarly with the worst of men; if he were the true Messias, as they thought, he would decline such evil company, and keep at a greater distance from sinners. They expected other things from the Messias, viz., that he should maintain the dignity of his person and office by a stately retirement, sequestering himself from common view, that the world might repair to him as a divine oracle, and never approach him without the greatest reverence and adoration. So that when they saw him so freely walk abroad, and to be so familiar with those who were none of the best, instead of receiving him as a Saviour, they rejected him as an impostor; styling him 'a glutton, a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners,' a companion and favourer of loose and vile persons.

Now to remove this offence, our Saviour lets them know, that

the end of his conversing with these men was not to encourage or harden them in their evil ways, but to reclaim them from them, and at once to convince and convert them from the error of their ways: he was so far from approving the exactions of the publicans, that he exacted repentance and reformation from them, and conversed with sinners, not to countenance, but to reprehend and reform their vice and wickedness. By which means, some of the publicans, from being exacters of tribute, became the teachers of righteousness, and many of the sinners were 'turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:' which was so far from being inconsistent with the holiness of the Messiah, that it was indeed the main end of his coming. He told them in St. Matthew's gospel, that 'the whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick;' and that he vouchsafed his company, not where it might be most desired, but where it was most needed, for 'he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:' meaning, that his main business was with those humble and modest offenders that were sensible of their faults, and willing to amend them; these being more likely to be reduced to a better course of life, than such as are conceited of their own holiness, and scorn others, as unworthy of their society and conversation. Moreover, he bids them go and learn the meaning of that saying of God Almighty, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:' wherein he prefers the acts of mercy and charity to men's souls, before all the ritual observances of the law, and much more before all the nice formalities of conversation. For this end it was that he so freely ate and drank with publicans and sinners, and though he 'went up and down' to and with all sorts of men, yet it was 'still doing' good, and healing all kinds of maladies, both of body and soul: so that the Pharisees might as well blame the physicians of the body for visiting hospitals and sick patients, as the physician of the soul for applying himself to such as laboured under more spiritual and dangerous distempers.

Again, he tells them, that 'he came to seek and to save all that were lost; that he was sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' to bring them home 'to the great Shepherd and Bishop of their souls,' and after that to reduce all that were gone astray both of Jews and Gentiles, to gather them all into one flock, and to bring them into one fold; which things could not be done without making himself known to and conversing with them; for that alone could give him the opportunity of teaching and instructing mankind, of instilling his doctrine into them, and preaching to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. This our Saviour here in St. Luke explains and exemplifies to us in two or three parables; viz., those of the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the lost son; in all which he insinuates his tender love and care of lost man, and willingness to save and reduce the greatest sinners.

The first of these parables is in the third and following verses of this gospel: 'And he spake this parable unto them, saying,

What man of you having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?' Where sinners are fitly resembled to lost sheep: 1. Because no creature is so apt to wander as the sheep, which is so heedless as not to keep right, unless it be still under the shepherd's eye; and this shews how easily we are misled, how often we fall by temptation, and seldom continue long in the right way. Again, 2. No creature is more helpless and liable to danger than a straying sheep; it hath many enemies, and no guard against them; the dog, the wolf, the fox, are all ready to devour and make it their prey. This represents the forlorn condition of lost man, who, when out of the care of the good Shepherd, is entangled with the world, ensnared by Satan, oppressed by wicked men, and is utterly unable to escape or defend himself against his ghostly enemies. Once more, a wandering sheep, of all creatures, is the most unlikely of itself ever to return; for being once bewildered, it will stray for ever, unless the shepherd find and restore it: so is it with lost man, who being out of the way would return no more, except he be reduced by the Shepherd, which is by hearing his voice and following him.

Now who is there, saith the parable, who having lost a sheep, doth not bestir himself and go after it, till he find it? How much more, then, are erring and straying sinners to be sought after, who would wander for ever in the ways of destruction, if not restored and directed into the paths of life? But to go on with the parable: when the owner of the lost sheep had found it, it is said, in the next words, 'he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing;' he feeleth not the burden, which is much the lighter by removing the heaviness and trouble he had in the loss of it: and 'when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found the sheep that was lost.' He makes merry with them, and doubles his joys from the fears he had of losing it, and the pains he took in finding it. Likewise, 'I say unto you, (saith our Saviour,) joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance;' meaning, that God who is represented here by the owner of the lost sheep, and the holy angels and glorified spirits above, which are meant by his friends and neighbours, conceive no small joy at the return of a penitent sinner. As for the angels, they being the guardians of God's children, and ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, may be well enough supposed to be affected with the welfare and happiness of each. For we find this heavenly host singing at our Saviour's coming into the world for the redemption of mankind; and ever since desire to contemplate and admire this great mystery. And every occasion of this kind may minister to their gladness, and give a new accession to their joy.

But when God is said to rejoice at the repentance of a sinner, it must be understood as spoken after the manner of men; for God is void of all passions and perturbations, and above the transports of joy and sorrow. So that when God is said to be angry, to be grieved, or to be provoked by sinners, it is meant only of the effects of those passions that he will deal with them, as if he were affected with them as we are in such cases, though the passions themselves are not compatible to the Divine nature. In like manner, when God is said to rejoice at the repentance of a sinner, it is meant only of its being very agreeable and acceptable to him.

But why is the joy greater for the finding of one lost sheep, or the return of one penitent sinner, than of all the ninety and nine, that never went astray and needed no repentance? Why, this is here parabolically expressed, to signify, not that there is more joy in heaven for one that was once bad, than for many that had been always good; but it is spoken only to enhance the joy upon the present occasion: for as the rescuing of one child from the pit of destruction, affects more for the present than the safety of all the rest, and as the finding of one thing, supposed to be lost, rejoices more than the possession of all the other; so the return of one lost person occasions more present satisfaction than many others, though the same should happen to them in the like circumstance.

This is the first parable by which our Saviour sought to convince the Pharisees of the reasonableness of his conversing with the publicans and sinners, in order to their repentance and salvation: for if there be joy in heaven at the conversion of a sinner, there should be no murmuring on earth at the means used to reclaim them.

The second parable to the like purpose is in the 8th and following verses: 'What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?' Where the lost sinner is compared to a lost piece of silver, which being a thing of value, stamped and made current by the regal authority, was searched after with great diligence; the candle was lighted to look into every corner, the house was swept that it might not lie hid or buried in the dust, and all means were used by a narrow and diligent search, till she found it. In like manner, the souls of men being esteemed precious, and stamped with the image of God, are to be carefully looked after, and not suffered to be lost or cast away by negligence or inadvertency; but being of more value than the whole world, ought to be preserved by the utmost care and vigilance, and no means to be neglected for their happiness and salvation.

It follows in the parable, that when the woman had 'found' her lost piece of money, 'she calleth her friends and neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece

which I had lost.' We are bid in holy Scripture to 'rejoice with them that rejoice,' as well as 'weep with them that weep;' that is, to bear a part in the joys and sorrows of one another, which will be a means of increasing the one, and lessening the other. The good woman here having found what she sought for with great care and pains, is transported with a joy suitable to the concern she had for its loss: of this joy she would have her neighbours to partake, and therefore calls them together to share with her in it; and from thence we are directed to the delight and satisfaction which the saints and angels have above at the repentance of a sinner: 'Likewise I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' By which it appears, that heaven feels, and is full of this joy; and when we are pleased with any wicked man's turning from the evil of his ways, we join in consort with the heavenly host, and bear a part of the general joy with the blessed inhabitants of heaven, who all rejoice at the conversion of a sinner: and if there be so great and general a satisfaction above in this case, sure we ought not to take any offence at conversing with them here to that end.

The third and last parable to this purpose is that of the prodigal or lost son; which though immediately following this, yet being out of the gospel for this day, shall be the more lightly touched upon. This son had wickedly left his father's house, 'and spent all his substance in riotous living;' by which means he was lost to his father, to himself, and to all the comforts of life; but 'when he came to himself,' he bewailed his misery and folly, and returned to his father, who received him as one raised from the dead, and welcomed him with an extraordinary joy. At which when the elder son repined, for shewing more joy for a riotous profligate son, than was ever shewed to him who never offended, the father mildly replied, 'Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine; it was meet we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found;' signifying, that we may and ought to rejoice at the return of straying sinners. By these and the like parables, our Saviour endeavoured to convince the scribes and Pharisees of the benefit and charity of his eating with publicans and sinners; and that the freedom of his conversation with them was rather a matter of joy, than any just occasion of offence.

This is the scope and design of this day's gospel; from which we may learn,—

1st, The lost and undone condition of mankind in their natural and unregenerate state, whilst they continue in their sins without repentance. This is represented in the three resemblances of the lost sheep, the lost groat, and the lost son; all which set forth the desperateness and deplorableness of their condition. The lost sheep is never safe or out of danger, till he be restored again to the flock: the lost groat is of no use or value, till it be found

and added to the other treasure: the lost son is in a helpless and remediless condition, without returning to his father. And such are the miserable circumstances of all straying and wandering sinners; whilst they are addicted to vice and error, they are out of the way to all happiness, and are going directly in the way to hell and destruction. If, then, they have any sense or apprehension of their present danger, or any fears, as they well may, of worse hereafter, let this awaken them out of their security, and seriously consider their sad and desperate condition. To which end we are here taught,—

2dly, To use all possible means and industry to get out of this miserable and forlorn estate; for this reason the shepherd sought his straggling sheep through deserts and mountains, and could not rest till he found and brought them back to the fold. The careful woman lighted her candle, swept the house, and ceased not her search till she found the piece that was mislaid. The lost son could have no ease or comfort till he went back again to his father: even so all wandering sinners, that are gone out of the way of God's precepts and protection, should use all possible means to get in again, and never give themselves any rest till they have found the path of life.

3dly, From the joy that is in heaven at the conversion of sinners, we may learn what encouragement we have to the great duty of repentance; for hereby we not only promote our own happiness, but in some measure add to the joy and felicity of heaven, by doing a thing so delightful to God and his holy angels. 'Fulfil ye my joy, (saith St. Paul to the Philippians,) in being like-minded.' Phil. ii. 2. How much more should we fulfil the joy of the glorified spirits above, who are so zealously affected, and so tenderly concerned for our happiness and salvation!

Lastly, From our Saviour's freedom of conversation in the world, we may learn humanity, courtesy, and affability to mankind. Nabal, for his churlishness, was styled 'one of the sons of Belial;' and to bid others 'stand off, come not nigh, for I am holier than thou,' is rather the language of a proud Pharisee, than the guise of a good Christian. Our blessed Saviour shewed himself marvellously free and conversable with all sorts of men, in order to their good; he suffered the publicans and sinners to draw nigh to him, and to hear him, though the scribes and Pharisees blamed this familiarity: there was nothing austere or supercilious in him, but in the whole course of his life he was obliging and affable to all men, and would have us 'learn' that lesson of him, to be 'meek and lowly in heart;' and that will keep us from despising any, and teach us to condescend to all good offices to one another; so shall we advance peace, goodwill, and happiness here on earth, and add to the joys and hallelujahs of heaven; which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ROM. viii. 18—24.— *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God: for the creature was made subject to vanity,* &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to pray unto God, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, to multiply upon us his mercy, that he being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.

Now, because nothing is so apt to discourage and hinder us from seeking or attaining eternal good things, as the temporal evils and sufferings of this present life; therefore the epistle for the day heartens us under them, with the expectation not only of a speedy relief, but of an eternal reward for them; for 'if we suffer with Christ, (saith the foregoing verse,) we shall shall also be glorified together.' And then, setting them one against the other: 'I reckon (saith the apostle) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' Where we may observe,—

First, That sufferings may and do befall the best men here in this life.

Secondly, That there is a future glory that will be revealed in us to reward them.

Thirdly, That there is no comparison between the one and the other.

First, I say, that the best men may and often do meet with sufferings here in this life. This is here plainly supposed, for the apostle's reckoning the present sufferings not fit to be compared with our future glory, manifestly implies that he reckoned upon them; and so must we too, while we live here, or else we shall find ourselves much out in our reckoning: for this world is the scene of misery and trouble, and no virtue or goodness, how great soever, can exempt us from them; yea, sometimes the greater it is, the more it exposes to envy and trouble. Job, the richest and best man in the east, had a large share of them: David, a man after God's own heart, was more than ordinarily exercised with them: yea, the Son of God himself, the great example of all holiness and virtue, could not have this bitter cup pass from him, and many of his followers and disciples have ever since drank deep of the same; which made the apostle say, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.' The way to heaven is not strewed with roses, but beset with thorns, and 'we are through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' This is the way that all the saints and martyrs have

gone before us; they endured the cross before they obtained the crown, and it will be in vain for us to hope to arrive at it any other way.

Sufferings, then, must be reckoned upon here in this life; which are sent to us, to keep us humble, to try our patience and constancy, to wean us from this world, and to prepare us for a better. And this will lead us,—

Secondly, To the next thing supposed or taken for granted in these words, to wit, that there is a future glory reserved as a reward for our present sufferings; for the apostle's mentioning here a glory to be revealed in us to crown our present sufferings, plainly supposeth the truth of both; and that as we now feel the one, we shall ere long receive the other. This future glory is expressed in Scripture sometimes by 'a kingdom,' sometimes by 'a crown of righteousness,' sometimes by 'an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us;' which happiness was only guessed at by the wisest heathens, who from the afflictions of good men, and the prosperity of bad, concluded that there will be another life, in which these things will be set right, when vice shall receive its just punishment, and virtue its due recompense of reward.

But what they learned only by the faint conjectures of natural reason, we are better assured of by the clearer discoveries of divine revelation: 'Life and immortality being brought to light unto us by the gospel;' where we read the words of eternal life, and have a full assurance of a blessed immortality.

It was this that supported the saints and martyrs in all ages under all their sufferings; of whom we read, that they had an eye to this recompense of reward. Those famous worthies, mentioned in the 11th chapter to the Hebrews, did and suffered the great things there rehearsed, by the strength of their faith, and the hopes of glory; yea, our blessed Saviour himself is said to have 'endured the cross for the glory that was set before him.' Heb. xii. 2.

In short, afflictions must be counted upon, and provided for, whilst we are here, being not only expedient, but necessary for many great and wise ends; which, if they attain, we may comfortably expect a happy and speedy deliverance from them, and that they will shortly end in unspeakable bliss and glory; both which things are here plainly supposed and taken for granted.

But is this future glory a sufficient balance and compensation for the present sufferings we here endure in hopes of it? Yes, and vastly greater; for so the apostle, in the

Third place, expressly tells us: 'I reckon (saith he) that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' If they be put in the balance together, the former will be so far outweighed by the latter, that there is, indeed, no comparison to be made between

them. For the same apostle elsewhere tells us, that 'these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. iv. 7; where the apostle, considering these things together, observes a vast difference and disproportion between them; and that chiefly in these two things:—

1st, In the weight; they are but light afflictions, but an exceeding weight of glory.

2dly, In the duration; the afflictions are but for a moment, but it is an eternal weight of glory. And what comparison can there be between the lightness of a feather, and the weight of a heavy and ponderous body? Or who would compare a moment with eternity? And yet this and far greater is the disproportion between the sufferings of this present time, and the glory that shall be revealed in us. The better to clear this, I say,—

1st, The lightness of afflictions makes them unworthy to be compared to a weight of glory. I know it is hard to persuade any under trouble that their afflictions are light; for 'no chastisement for the present is joyous, but grievous:' all sufferings are against the grain of nature, and most men are apt to complain of the burden of them; but yet there are many considerations that may alleviate the evil, and lighten the burden of them. As, first, by comparing what we suffer with the much greater punishments that we deserve, and that will mightily lessen our sense and opinion of it: if one that is condemned to die comes off with a little whipping, we account the punishment light and easy; and if we who are sentenced to eternal death are pardoned and preserved from it by a little correction, we can have no reason to complain. Again, if we compare our sufferings with the infinitely greater sufferings of Christ for our sake, we may easily reckon ours to be but light and gentle afflictions. Moreover, if we compare the sufferings of this life with the unspeakable torments of the damned in the next, to which sin naturally leads, we may reckon them not worthy to be named or mentioned together. But, lastly, if we compare the afflictions of this life, which upon all these accounts may be justly thought light, with that exceeding excessive weight of glory, which they work out for us in the next, we shall find them to vanish into nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. But,—

2dly, Not only the lightness, but the shortness of these afflictions, makes them unworthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in us; for 'these afflictions are but for a moment,' but it is 'an eternal weight of glory' that follows them. All the sufferings we meet with here will be soon over; 'Sorrow may endure for a night, (saith the Psalmist), but joy cometh in the morning.' The longest term of their duration is for the short space of this life; and if they end not sooner, death will surely put a period to them: but this future glory is everlasting, and knows neither end nor decay; it is a kingdom that can never be

moved, and a crown that shall never be taken from us. And now what comparison is there between a minute and the boundless duration of eternity? What proportion between the light dust of the balance and the heavy globe of the earth? or between the small drop of a bucket, and the whole ocean? And yet this and much greater is the difference and disproportion between light momentary afflictions and an exceeding, excessive, and eternal weight of glory: where the apostle seems to labour how to express as well as bear it; it is *καθ' ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν αἰώνιον βάρος δόξης*; which implies such a heavy massy crown of glory, that it will be as much as the soul will be able to bear or stand under. And therefore the apostle rightly reckons the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be named or compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; which is enough to set all good Christians a longing for it, not to value any thing here below, whether prosperous or adverse, but to wait with patience for the revealing of it. This we should the rather do, because, as the next words tell us, 'The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.' What this earnest expectation of the creature is, what the manifestation of the sons of God, and how the creature is said to wait for it, are matters of some difficulty to understand, and are therefore variously expounded by interpreters.

Some understand these things of the Gentile world, who were then expecting what would befall the Jews, whether the Son of God were truly manifested to them, or who among them should be manifested to be the true sons of God: for 'the creature was made subject to vanity;' that is, the heathen world (say they) were held in a state of ignorance and idolatry, which is in Scripture often called vanity; and that 'not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope;' that is, this their dark and forlorn condition was none of their own choice, but it was by the will of God, who suffered them to continue awhile in those idolatries, in hopes of being better instructed and enlightened by the gospel. So the next words intimate; 'Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God:' meaning, as they expound it, that the heathens themselves should, by the gospel or grace of Christ, be rescued from the slavery they were in to Satan and the bondage of idolatry, and be instated in the rights and privileges of the sons and children of God, and so be made capable of the glory that shall be revealed in us. 'For we know (as the apostle goes on) that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now;' that is, the whole Gentile world is, as it were, in pangs of travail ever since Christ's coming, in a manner ready to bring forth sons and children of God, being in a good forwardness to receive the gospel, which many of the Jews reject. 'And not only they (saith our apostle) but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit; even we ourselves groan

within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies:' that is, not the heathens only, but we Christians, who have received Christ, and entered upon the profession of faith in him, do earnestly desire and expect this adoption of sons, waiting for a deliverance from the servitude and oppression of servants, and to be translated into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and to receive a redemption from all evils by the resurrection of the body. This is the sense that some put upon this obscure passage of holy Scripture; for which see the learned Dr. Hammond on the place.

Others again, and perhaps with greater reason, interpret this passage not only of the heathen world, who may hope to receive this benefit by Christ's coming; but of the whole natural world, and all the creatures in it, who, by a natural instinct, may look for some share in the benefit of it. And the reason of this expectation may be, because the whole world hath been by man's first sin put beside its first and natural establishment, into which it may perhaps have some innate desires and tendencies to be restored. For all the creatures in it are by the first transgression said to be made subject to vanity, to be put out of their due course and order, and made to administer to the vain desires and corrupt designs of mankind; and that too against their will, and without their knowledge, being overruled by a superior power, to which they are subject, not without some hopes of being one time or other set right again: which hopes are grounded upon this, that they having suffered part of the curse for man's sin, when he shall be re-established in grace and glory, they may, in some measure, be rescued and restored too; according to that of Isaiah, 'Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.' Isa. lxv. 17. The Psalmist tells us of God's 'renewing the face of the earth,' which hath been deformed by man's wickedness: and St. Peter speaks of 'new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' Suitable hereunto our apostle here declares, that 'the creature also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' At present he tells us, that 'the whole creation groans' under the weight and burden of man's transgression, and travails in pain to be delivered of it; of which they may have some secret hopes or natural impulses towards it, which is that 'earnest expectation of the creature, that puts them upon waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.' And not only they, (saith the apostle,) but we who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, and the foretastes of a future happiness, earnestly long for the completion of it, by the regeneration of our soul, and the redemption of our body. So that the force and sum of the apostle's reasoning herein seems to be this: if all inferior creatures, who secretly feel and groan under the miseries that sin hath brought upon them, naturally long for a deliverance from them; of which, by an invisible instinct, they have some hope and expec-

tation; how much more may we, who have higher faculties and fuller discoveries made to us of these evils, groan within ourselves, and long for a redemption from them? especially considering that unspeakable bliss and glory they will ere long be attended withal; which is so great, that we may justly reckon the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

This is briefly the sense of the epistle for this day; which may teach us sundry lessons: as,—

1st, From the apostle's reckoning upon sufferings here in this life, let us learn to do so too; for it is certain they will come in one kind or other, either in body, goods, or name, and it is better to expect and provide against them, than to have them seize us unawares. Let none dream only of happy and halcyon days, or say, with David, that his 'mountain is made so strong, that it cannot be moved;' for it is but for God 'to hide his face,' and by-and-by 'we are troubled.' And God will hide his face, or frown upon such secure and bold sinners, to shew them their error, and to punish their presumption. We were better then to count upon and look for afflictions, which are as necessary as physic for the health and welfare of our souls, and serve as goads to mind and prick us forward in our duty. Let us, with the mariners at sea, prepare for a storm in the midst of a calm, and then we shall weather it the better, and come the sooner into a safe harbour.

2dly, From the apostle's reckoning upon a future glory to be revealed in us to crown and reward our sufferings, let us learn to do the same, and that will enable us to bear them with the greater courage and patience, and make us rather rejoice than repine at tribulations. Indeed, if matters be well weighed, afflictions are no such heavy and dreadful things as we vainly imagine; for though they may carry a stern aspect to flesh and blood, yet if we look to the end of them, and consider that eternal weight of glory they work out for us, all the terror of them will vanish, and we shall see greater cause to own the kindness, than complain of the hardship of such sufferings. Let none then 'despise the chastening of the Lord, or faint when he is rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourges every son whom he receiveth.'

Let us not increase our burden by impatience, nor entangle ourselves, like a bird in the snare, with too much fluttering; but rather commit ourselves unto God in well-doing, and patiently rely upon his providence, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape.

3dly, From the vast disproportion between the sufferings of this present time, and the glory that shall be revealed in us, we may learn to live above this world, and by the eye of faith to look through the troubles of this life, to the happiness of the next; between which, our text tells us, there is no comparison. If the

cross be placed in the highway to a crown, it will be greater wisdom to take it up, and bear it awhile, than seek to decline it by ways that lead to greater and everlasting sufferings.

4thly, From the creature's being made subject to vanity, and the whole creation's groaning under the weight of man's first transgression, we learn the heinousness and malignity of sin, which thus cracked the heart-strings of nature, and brought these pangs of sorrow upon the whole creation; which should teach us to abhor and abandon it, as the occasion of all the evil and mischief that is in the world: it hath brought disorder and distress upon all the creatures, and without repentance it will yet bring greater upon us; and that which sunk nature into such confusion, will, if not amended, sink our souls into hell.

Lastly, From the earnest expectation of the creature to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, let us learn to long much more for the adoption of sons, and to be instated into the glorious liberty of the children of God. In a word, let the present sufferings of this life take off our hearts from all things here below, and set us a waiting and preparing for that incomparable and transcendent glory that shall be revealed in us hereafter: to which God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all, through the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE vi. 36—43.—*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful: judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*, &c.

THIS gospel for the day is taken out of our blessed Saviour's divine sermon on the mount, as it is delivered by St. Matthew and St. Luke. The part or portion of it selected for this day's meditation, contains the great duty or virtue of mercifulness, which is here recommended to us in all its branches: it begins thus; 'Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.' The word 'therefore' shews it to be an inference from the foregoing verse; wherein our Saviour bids us to 'love our enemies, to do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great: and ye shall be the children of the highest, for he is kind to the unthankful, and to the evil:' and from thence infers, 'Be ye therefore merciful,' &c. Where we have a precept and a pattern; the precept is, to 'be merciful;' the pattern is, 'as your Father also is merciful.' St. Matthew expresses it by being 'perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,' Matt. v. 48; to signify that mercifulness is the perfection of all virtues, called therefore by the apostle, 'The bond of perfectness;' and likewise

that it is the highest perfection of a good Christian, making 'the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good word and work.' Now this mercifulness consists both in giving and forgiving; the former relates to the wants and necessities, the latter to the trespasses and failings of one another; giving to the one, and forgiving of the other: both which are to be briefly considered.

The first branch of mercifulness consists in giving, and that relates to the wants and necessities both of body and soul. As for the wants of the body, that stands in need of food, physic, and raiment; and therefore the acts of mercifulness here are to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to redeem captives, to entertain strangers, and the like. These are recited by our Saviour, in his account of the proceedings of the last day; and the good Samaritan is commended for taking care of the distressed traveller, by pouring in of wine and oil into his wounds, and making other provisions for him, with a charge to all men to go and do likewise. As for the wants of the soul, that stands in need of counsel, comfort, admonition, and encouragement; and therefore the acts of mercifulness here are to instruct the ignorant, to counsel and settle doubting persons, to admonish sinners, to comfort the afflicted, to support the weak, to correct the obstinate, to preserve men from sin, and the temptations leading thereunto, and the like: all which are required and expected of us, according to the several places and stations wherein God hath set us.

Moreover, there are acts of mercifulness that relate to men's goods and good names: those that respect men's goods, are to preserve them, as far as we may, from rapine and robbery, to relieve the oppressed, to undo heavy burdens, to see the needy and necessitous have right, and to promote, as much as we can, by our interest and good word, the prosperity of all men. To this the apostle directs, Gal. vi. 10; 'As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' Again, there are acts of mercy and charity to men's good names, as to discountenance evil reports, to vindicate honest men's reputation from slander, detraction, and defamation, and to give every one the just praises of his worth and good works.

These acts of mercifulness are to be extended to all men, high or low, friends and foes; for our Saviour commands us to 'love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us;' for so the pattern here added to the precept obliges to, for we are bid to be merciful, as our Father also is merciful; that is, to follow his example, who is 'kind to the unthankful, and to the evil:' he maketh the sun to shine upon the good and bad, and the rain to descend on the just and unjust; he scatters his blessings promiscuously upon all persons, and thereby teaches us to make no distinction in the common offices of humanity and charity. Solomon tells us, that 'a good man is merciful to his

beast;' he will not overlade or overwork him: but as the providence of God takes care for oxen, so will he provide necessaries for all creatures that serve him, and are under his care. But much more is our compassion to be shewed to the bodily wants, and the necessities of men's souls, who are made after the image of God, and are of the same kind and nature with ourselves, whose needs are to be supplied out of the abundance of those talents which God hath intrusted us withal. Moreover, a good man will be tender of the credit and reputation of others, and will be merciful in his censures and judgment of other men; so we are directed in the next words, 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned:' which words condemn not the public office of a judge, nor forbid the condemning of criminals upon a fair hearing in courts of judicature; for these act in God's name, and by his authority, and what they do herein is absolutely necessary for the public peace, order, and safety of the commonwealth: and so are indeed acts of mercy highly conducing to the public welfare, by countenancing virtue, and suppressing wrong. But the judging here condemned, is private persons rash judging and censuring one another without any authority; and passing sentence upon the actions of others, without any examination of the matter, to which they have no right or call. This is a practice too common in the world, most people's discourse, in their impertinent visits, consisting of tales and stories of their neighbours, whereby they play away their reputation, and please themselves in one another's follies and weaknesses. Neither is this practice less mischievous and malicious, thus to destroy the credit of others by rash judgment and censures; it hinders the good and welfare of neighbours, undermines the peace and comfort of society, begets hatred, discord, and contention, increases law-suits, promotes revenge, and does unspeakable mischief; beside, it usurps the authority of God, and invades his tribunal: and therefore the apostle asks the censurer, 'Who made thee a judge?' and 'who art thou that judgest another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth:' and having no such power committed to thee, 'Why dost thou judge thy brother? God hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness;' and therefore lay aside thy weak and partial judgment, and 'judge nothing before the time:' for thee to meddle herein, is to take too much upon thee, and to forestal the day of judgment. But if the sinfulness and injustice hereof will not discourage men from it, let the danger of it deter them from this evil practice. Our Saviour's caution in St. Matthew is, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged;' implying, that they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy:' men will repay their censures upon them, and will judge as harshly of them as they do of others; but God will repay them much more, and pass the severest sentence upon them for taking the right of judicature out of his hands, and judging of his servants. But our Saviour

here, in St. Luke, encourages men to forbear this practice from motives of mercy, which will be shewed to them that shew it to others: 'Judge not, (saith he,) and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.' Men are not so forward to speak or judge hardly of those that are wont to speak and judge favourably of others; nor will they condemn or pass sentence upon such as put the best construction on others' actions, and give to every one their due commendation. The good effects of their mercy and charity are commonly returned into their bosom: 'Give,' therefore, saith our Saviour, good words, and good works to others, 'and it shall be given to you;' and that in 'good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom;' which, referring to all sorts of commodities, dry and liquid, signifies the plentiful returns that will be made for all the acts of mercy and loving-kindness: 'for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.' They that trade in evil reports and hard censures, will be surely paid home in their own coin; and they that deal in good words and kind actions, shall have the kindness of both abundantly repaid by God and man; in which both Scripture and experience may fully confirm us. This is the first branch of mercifulness, which consists in giving, and directs us to shew mercy to the bodies, the souls, the goods, and good names of all men.

The second branch of this virtue consists in forgiving; to which we are here likewise called and encouraged in these words, 'Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.' Where, by 'forgiving,' we are to understand the passing by of injuries, especially censures, contumelies, and all sorts of indignities; which we are to be so far from revenging, as not to suffer them to cool or lessen our charity towards them that do them, but rather to heap the acts of mercy and charity upon the heads of such enemies, as well as friends. To this we are frequently exhorted: 'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves,' but rather return good for evil; so that 'if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for thereby thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,' not to consume, but to melt him into love and kindness. And if we thus forgive others, we shall be forgiven ourselves. Men are commonly willing to pardon the faults and failings of those who are willing to pardon others; but God will be much more so, for he hath made our forgiving of others the condition of his forgiving of our offences; and if we perform our part, we may be sure God will not fail of his. And therefore,—

If the world should be so wicked and short-sighted as to reproach any for his kindness, and return him nothing but evil for his good-will, yet let him not be dismayed: our Saviour met with such usage from the world, and was rewarded for it with a crown of glory; and so shall we too, if we persevere to the end in well-doing. This he illustrates here by a parable, saying, 'Can

the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?' If we follow the blind guidance of the world, must we not be led into great errors and dangers? Can it be thought that 'the disciple should be above his Master?' And if he met with the censures and contradiction of sinners against himself, may we hope wholly to escape them? Is it not sufficient for the servant to be treated as his Lord? Yea, 'every one that is perfect shall be as his Master; and if he was made perfect by sufferings, shall we grudge to arrive at it the same way?

After this, our Saviour turns his discourse again to the rigid censurers, by another parable, saying, in the next words, 'And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?' Where, by 'the moat in the brother's eye,' is meant some lesser failing or infirmity, such as some indecency of behaviour, some inadvertence or indiscretion; which having no great guilt or malignity in it, is compared to the small dimensions of a mote, which, if gotten into the eye, may a little disturb the sight, but not darken or put it out. By 'the beam in their own eye,' we are to understand some greater crime or enormity; which, having the bigger dimensions of a beam, totally hinder the sight, and keep the eye from discerning matters aright. So that the sense of this rebuke is, Why dost thou so easily see and censure small faults in others, when thou hast much greater of thine own; which thy pride makes thee overlook, and thy partiality will not suffer thee to discover? Now, from hence we learn two very obvious, but sad truths:—

1st, The proneness of mankind to espy and aggravate small faults in other men. There is scarce a mote in a brother's eye, which an evil eye will not discover; yea, and magnify too into a beam: the censurer is eagle-eyed to discern another's failings, and can make a mole-hill to become a mountain. Do not too many put the worst construction upon some men's words and actions, omitting all the circumstances that may extenuate and excuse them, and insisting only on those that may enhance and increase the guilt? And this proceeds (as was before hinted) sometimes from pride, which prompts men to asperse and blacken others, that themselves may shine the brighter; sometimes from envy, which cannot bear the lustre of another's merits, and therefore must raise some dust of detraction to obscure and darken it; sometimes from malice, which works its mischievous ends upon those it hates, by blasting their reputation; sometimes again this proceeds from differences in religion, it being usual with sectaries and separatists to raise and spread evil reports of others, to countenance their own separation. In short, there is a certain pride and pleasure that some men take in finding faults, partly to shew their great sagacity and integrity above others, and partly to gain some power and superiority over them, that they may appear greater by a show of being better than they. And

there is that ill-nature and ill-will reigning in many, that never speaks well, but makes them ever ready to shoot out their arrows, even bitter words.

2dly, We may observe here, as the proneness of men to espy faults in others, so their great backwardness to see their own greater miscarriages. One would think that a beam should be more easily seen than a mote; and, indeed, so it would, if there were not something else to interpose and hinder: but such is the prejudice and partiality of most men, that they can sooner see a mote in their brother's eye, than a beam in their own. They that, like Argus, are all eyes to behold the least slip or infirmity of their neighbours, are yet stark blind with relation to themselves, and cannot see a much greater enormity of their own; and this is owing to self-love and self-interest. Men are so fond of themselves, that they cannot see any thing amiss in them, and, like Lais, would break their looking-glass, if it shewed the spots and wrinkles of their face. Others again are so addicted to their interest, as to hide all that may hinder it; and because vice and wickedness, fraud and falsehood, are great enemies to prosperity and preferment, they must by all means be concealed in themselves, and disclosed in others. This Horace perceived long since in his time, *cum tua pervideas*, &c.; and half an eye may plainly discern it in ours.

3dly, Our Saviour observes here men's forwardness not only to see, but to reform and amend faults in others, without any regard to their own. This is held forth in the next question: 'Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye?' Where he rebukes the forwardness of their zeal, who would pull out a mote, or amend a small failing in another, and in the mean time overlook a beam, and neglect more heinous enormities, in themselves. We know some who talk much of reformation of manners, and call loudly for the punishing of vice and immorality, when at the same time they can indulge themselves in the more pernicious evils of schism, dissension, and all manner of disobedience.

These our Saviour, in the next verse, calls by the name of 'hypocrites,' and directs to another and better course for the reforming of manners, saying, 'Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother's eye.' Where he first brands such reformers with the name of hypocrites, for affecting a feigned show of greater piety and religion than other men, and seeking to appear to the world better than they really are. Next, he lays before them the true and right rule of reformation, which is to begin with ourselves, and to amend what is amiss there. True reformation, like charity, begins at home, and makes men more solicitous to reform their own ways, than to pry into and censure the manners of others. Such *censores*

morum had need have not only sufficient authority, but an exemplary and unspotted integrity; lest their own miscarriages upbraid the forwardness of their zeal, and confute their goodliest pretences. To act aright, then, we must first pull out the beam that is in our own eye; for while that is there, it will so cloud and intercept the sight, that we shall not see matters aright either in ourselves or others. But when that is removed, then shall we see the more clearly to pull out the mote that is in our brother's eye. We shall be able with better judgment and greater authority to reprove and reform others, when our own miscarriages are laid aside, and cannot be objected against us.

This is the sum of this day's gospel: it remains that we observe and practise the great lessons contained in it; as,—

1. To be ever mindful of the great duty of mercifulness, and that in both the branches of giving and forgiving: by the one, giving to the wants and necessities of others; by the other, forgiving the injuries and trespasses done to ourselves; and in both, imitating the goodness and bounty of our heavenly Father, who denies not the blessings of the sun and the rain to the evil and unthankful, and passes by the offences of them that daily provoke him. Let us not, then, confine the good offices of mercy and kindness to them only, from whom we have or hope to receive the like again; for this is rather bartering than bounty, and is not so much mercy as merchandise: but let us extend them to those that are unable or unwilling to return them; yea, to such as repay us only with ingratitude and unkindness; so shall we become 'the children of the Most High,' and 'be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.' And this we should the rather do, because the proceedings of the last and great day of judgment will turn much upon this point of shewing mercy. They that have relieved Christ in his members, shall be pronounced blessed, and enter into their Master's joy; they that have neglected or refused these acts of mercy, shall be denounced cursed, and doomed to utter and eternal darkness.

2. From this discourse, we may learn to be merciful in our censures, not judging and condemning one another, but interpreting men's words in the best sense, and putting the best construction upon all their actions. This charity and the commands of God require of all Christians, whereas all uncharitable and censorious judging is directly opposite and contrary to both. It is a piece of injustice done to God, by taking his work out of his hand, and invading of his prerogative: 'Every one of us (saith the apostle) shall give an account of himself to God; and therefore let us not judge one another any more.' Rom. xiv. 12, 13. 'Speak not evil one of another, (saith St. James,) he that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law;' he sets himself above the rule that he is to walk by, and so is no longer 'a doer of the law, but a judge;' which is a high presumption, for 'there

is one Lawgiver and Judge, who is able to save and to destroy; and who art thou that judgest?' James iv. 11, 12. Moreover, this judging another is a great piece of injustice done to our brother, by usurping a power over him, that no way belongs to us; it is judging another man's servant without any leave or authority from his master; it is an encroachment upon the liberty of Christians in things indifferent; for 'why is my liberty judged (saith the apostle) of another man's conscience?' for which no man hath any commission. 1 Cor. x. 29. Again, this judging is a great injury to the censurer himself; for his censures commonly recoil upon himself, and the darts he aims at others' reputation ofttimes wound his own; he frequently makes a rod for his own back, none being more shot at and censured than they who so liberally let fly these bolts; for 'with what judgment ye judge (saith our Saviour) ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' Matt. vii. 1, 2.

Lastly, From the rule of reformation here set by our Saviour, let us first begin with reforming and amending ourselves, and remove beams from our own eyes, before we meddle with motes in our brother's. Let us converse more at home, and sweep our own doors, before we look abroad and complain of the foulness of others. In a word, let us abstain from all rash and hard censures of others, and let us judge and condemn ourselves; and then we shall not be judged or condemned of the Lord; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCX.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Pet. iii. 8—15.—*Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another: love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing*, &c.

We are taught, in the collect for this day, to beseech Almighty God, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by his governance, that the Church may joyfully serve him in all godly quietness. To effect or bring this to pass,

The epistle for this day prescribes this excellent advice to that end, 'Be ye all of one mind;' signifying to us, that unity of mind and judgment is the best means to preserve the peace of the Church and all godly quietness; and likewise that diversity of opinions is the main cause of all the discord and confusion that happens in it. And therefore St. Paul, in his last advice to the Corinthians, joins them both together, saying, 'Finally, brethren, be of one mind, live in peace,' 2 Cor. xiii. 11; thereby intimating,

that there is a connexion or mutual dependence of these two upon each other, that unity will put an end to divisions, and the best way to live in peace is to be of one mind.

But what is that unity or oneness of mind here prescribed to that end? Why, that respects partly matters of religion, or the great affairs of the Church; and partly matters of practice, or the rules of a good life.

First, I say, we are to be all of one mind in the weighty matters of religion, viz., in the doctrine, discipline, and communion of the Church; in all which we are commanded to think and 'speak the same things, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.' 1 Cor. i. 10.

As for the doctrine of the Church, that is contained and delivered to us in the holy Scriptures, the standard of all divine truths; and is more briefly summed up for us in the Apostles' Creed, the touchstone of sound doctrine, or 'form of sound words,' which we are called upon to 'hold fast.' This is that 'one faith,' in which all Christians are to agree or unite, Eph. iv. 3, 4; it is that faith of the gospel, in which they are to stand fast in one spirit, and with one mind to strive for, Phil. i. 27.

As for the discipline of the Church, that likewise was instituted by Christ for the unity and edification of all its members. There is but 'one Lord,' saith the apostle, that is, Christ himself, the sole head and governor of his church; who 'gave first apostles, secondarily pastors, and then teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.' Eph. iv. 11, 12. Where 'first' signifies a primacy of order and jurisdiction; for the apostles were appointed to preside over the rest, to ordain elders in every city, and to set in order the things that were wanting. Tit. i. 5. And as they died away, others of the inferior order succeeded, and were advanced to their office, as Matthias was in the room of Judas. Herein our Saviour continued the ancient government of the Jewish church, which was in the 'high-priests, priests, and Levites:' he only changed the names, ordaining first 'apostles,' and under them 'pastors and teachers;' which holy discipline is still handed down and continued to us in a succession of 'bishops, priests,' and 'deacons;' which God long preserve. This is the discipline of the Church, in which we are all to be of one mind, without swerving from it, or setting up new models in opposition to it. Then,—

Lastly, For the worship and communion of the Church, that is 'the bond of peace,' mentioned by the apostle, that helps to make it 'one body,' by tying all the members together, and uniting them in one christian fellowship; for 'we being many, (saith the same apostle,) are one bread and one body,' by joining together in one communion: by this we serve God, as we should, with one heart and one consent, and with one mind and one mouth glorify our great Creator.

These are the great and weighty matters of religion, in which we are required to be all of one mind; for being all prescribed by Divine authority, and so made necessary and essential to the being and continuance of the christian church, we are all to agree and unite in them, and not to differ or divide about them.

But, Secondly, the oneness of mind here directed to, relates not only to the great affairs of religion and the Church, but likewise to matters of practice and the rules of a holy life; as will appear by the following part of this day's epistle; where we are bid to be of one mind,—

1st, In all acts of compassion and courtesy to one another: so the next words direct, 'Having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.' The sense whereof is, that we should agree together in all the mutual offices of love and kindness; sympathizing with our brethren in their afflictions, and bearing one another's burdens, thereby easing and comforting each other as much as possible; having a fellow-feeling of their afflictions, which will encourage them to bear up, and not sink under the weight of any trouble that may happen to them; imitating the good Samaritan, who poured in wine and oil into the wounds of the distressed traveller, which our Saviour there styles a friendly and neighbourly act, willing us to go and do likewise. This is to 'have compassion one of another,' and to 'love as brethren.' To which we are to add all acts of courtesy and kindness, relating to a prosperous as well as adverse condition; sharing in the one, and sympathizing in the other. This is to 'be kindly affectioned one to another, rejoicing with them that rejoice, and weeping with them that weep;' being affected with the good or evil that happens to any, and partaking in the joys and sorrows of one another; and in this we are bid to be all of one mind. And, as a consequent of this, the apostle wills us to be of one mind,—

2dly, In avoiding all manner of revenge and retaliation; saying, in the next verse, 'Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.' The meaning whereof is, that we should never permit ourselves, in any degree, to act or meditate revenge in case of any injury done to us; which, how great soever it may be, we must not think of returning the same or the like again. If the injury done be by acts of violence, to do the like again is the revenge of the hand; if it be by railing words and accusations, to return railing for railing is the revenge of the tongue; both which are carefully to be avoided by all the followers of Christ, who hath given us both his precepts and example to that purpose; for he hath commanded us to love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us, himself doing the same to his greatest adversaries. So that instead of recompensing evil for evil, we are to return good for evil, and blessing for cursing; for hereunto we are called by the precepts and profession of

Christianity. This mind the apostle would have us all to be of; and by thus doing good and blessing of others, we shall receive a blessing from God, not only in the life that now is, but in that which is to come.

And here the apostle, speaking against railing and the revenge of the tongue, adds a seasonable caution against it, backed with a strong motive or reason to enforce it, in the next words: 'For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.' Which words are quoted out of the 34th Psalm, 12th and following verses; where the Psalmist gives the same advice, and urges it upon the same considerations. There is none but desires to live long, and to see many and happy days; it is the voice of nature; 'Who will shew us any good,' and promote the comfort and prosperity of our lives? Why, here is a piece of wholesome counsel given to that end, to wit, to keep the tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering, and the lips from uttering any deceit or guile; both which will prevent many troubles that are apt to shorten and embitter our lives. 'The tongue,' when let loose, is by St. James styled 'a fire, a world of iniquity, that setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell,' James iii. 6; meaning, that it is frequently a means of kindling divisions, strife, and contention, and is the cause of infinite evils and confusions in the whole course of man's life; it sets kingdoms, families, and societies in a combustion, and for that purpose it is set on work by the devil, and inflamed by a fire that comes from hell.

Now, he that would live a quiet and happy life, must watch and restrain this unruly member, keeping it to the good behaviour, and confining it to the rules of truth and decency. David resolved to 'keep his mouth as it were with a bridle, whilst the ungodly was in his sight;' to prevent its extravagance, and to avoid the evil and mischief that too often proceeds from it. He that useth his tongue to falsehood and deceit, stirreth up much strife, and occasions sometimes very fatal and bloody contentions, to the shortening many times of men's lives, and the ruin of their relations; for bloody and deceitful persons shall not live out half their days. But he that useth and keepeth his tongue to truth and honesty, will prevent many a brawl, and preserve the lives, the peace and quietness of mankind. In short, then, to escape the dangers, and obtain the blessings of this life, we must keep our tongue from all atheistical and blasphemous speeches against God, from all evil and reviling speeches against our prince, and from all detracting, lying, and backbiting speeches against our neighbour; and so guide our words with discretion, that they may administer good to ourselves, and grace to the hearers. Herein likewise St. Peter would have all Christians to be like-minded, agreeing together in 'eschewing evil and doing good;' by all means 'seeking peace,' and if it seem to flee from them, to follow and 'pursue it.'

Now, to preserve this oneness of mind, or mutual agreement in these things, the apostle, in the next verse, presses it by a double argument; the one taken from the safety of so doing, the other from the danger of the contrary. The first is in these words, 'For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers;' that is, there is a watchful Providence over the humble and peaceable Christians, that will promote their good, and preserve them from evil; the eyes of the Lord are still looking about for their security, his ears are always open to hear their prayers, and his hands are ever ready to supply their wants and necessities. So that there can be nothing wanting, that may tend to their present or future happiness. Whereas, secondly,—

The next words tell us, that 'the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.' He is so far from countenancing the wicked and contentious, that he sets his face against them, and is no friend, but a professed enemy to them. To 'lift up the light of the countenance' is, in scripture phrase, a token of favour or kindness; but to 'set the face against' any, is to bid defiance to him, first to frown, and then to fight him. Accordingly, God's setting his face here against such evil-doers, is either to humble them for their good, or to bring greater evils upon them, to punish their pride and presumption.

But farther, to comfort and encourage the obedient, he asks the question, in the following verse, 'Who is he that will harm you, if ye are followers of that which is good?' Being guarded by the protection of Divine Providence, and the integrity of your own actions, few or none will incline or venture to do you any mischief. But if any should be so wicked as to molest and trouble you for adhering to the ways of unity and virtue, be not discouraged at such sufferings: 'For if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.' Be not dismayed or disturbed at these things, but rejoice in such tribulations, for great is your reward in heaven. Rather count them as blessings, than sink under them as burdens; for if you bear up manfully awhile, they will tend to the increase of grace here, and of glory hereafter. Only 'sanctify the Lord God in your hearts;' be thankful to him for all his dispensations, set him up in your hearts as your Lord God, and make him your fear and your dread; and then he will be both your patron and your portion for ever.

This is, in short, the substance of the epistle for this day; the whole design whereof is to persuade us to be all of one mind in the principles and practices of true religion, to unite in the worship and service of God, and to join together in the practice of all christian virtues, tending to our own good, and the welfare of one another.

But here some may be apt to tell us, that it is not possible for all men to be of one mind in these matters, and that such an unity never was or can be in the christian church.

In answer to this, the example of the primitive Christians, of whom we read that they were 'of one heart and one mind,' and that 'they continued steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer,' is a plain confutation of this objection; for this shews such a unity to be both possible and practicable, and that there was a time when this union was found, and dissensions unknown among Christians. Which example is recorded for our direction and encouragement, to let us know, that if we will do as they did, we may be as they were. Beside,—

The frequent and earnest exhortations to this unity in holy Scripture, plainly shew it to be attainable by all that will use the means, and have a mind to it; for the Holy Ghost never calls or puts any upon impossible or impracticable tasks.

Moreover, the many sharp and severe checks given by the apostles to the authors and abettors of divisions, farther shew this unity to be both possible and necessary; for as they would not advise to any thing that was impossible, so neither would they blame any for what was unavoidable.

But there are others who tell us, that if such a unity were possible, yet it is not necessary, no more than it is for all men to be of the same stature and complexion; and that different opinions and practices may as well be allowed in the Church, as different trades and callings are in the world. In answer to this, I say,—

1st, For all men to be of the same stature and complexion, is neither in their power, nor is it under any command, and so can be in no wise necessary; whereas to be all of one mind is frequently commanded in God's word, and so must be a necessary duty. And,—

2dly, Though there may be many particular callings and professions in the world, to employ men's different gifts and abilities for the public good; yet there is but one general calling as Christians, in which they are all to agree and go hand in hand together. So the apostle tells us, we 'are all called into one calling,' and have all but 'one hope of this calling,' even the salvation of our souls; which we are therefore all to aim at, without varying from, or dividing in it.

Thus we see wherein we are all to be of one mind; namely, in all the acts and duties of religion, that we owe to God and to one another; together with the weakness of those exceptions that are commonly brought against it.

It remains, then, that we be all followers of this unanimity, and jointly agree in all the parts and duties of it; going to the house of God together as friends, and to each other's houses as neighbours, abounding in all acts of piety and devotion to the one, and of justice, kindness, and compassion to the other. This is to 'dwell together in unity,' which the Psalmist makes the goodliest and pleasantest of all prospects. Psalm cxxxiii. 1. It

is to live the life of saints here, and of angels hereafter; yea, it is to 'do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven;' for there is a perfect harmony, consent, and unity among the blessed spirits above, who all join in one consort, and with united hearts and minds do the will, and sing the praises of their Maker; and to fit us for those heavenly mansions, we must labour for the same concord and unanimity here. Discord and dissensions are the dispositions of hell, and lead to those infernal regions; it is love, peace, and unity that must prepare us for the habitations above, and qualify us for the happiness and blessed society of heaven.

But how may we come to be thus of one mind in serving of God and one another? Why, that must be done,—

1. By removing all the obstacles of this godly love and unity; such as turbulent and unruly passions, which are apt to discompose and divide men's minds; pride, and a vain conceit of our own wisdom, which makes men refractory to their superiors, and peremptory in their own ways; inordinate self-love and worldly interest, which draw too strongly from the ways of truth and peace, and lead into all manner of errors and divisions; which occasioned St. Paul's advice, that 'all bitterness, wrath, clamour, and evil-speaking be put away, with all malice.' Eph. iv. 31. And St. Peter's to the same purpose, to 'lay aside all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil-speaking.' 1 Pet. ii. 1. These are the main hinderances of unity, and are therefore to be carefully watched against and avoided by all that would promote or pray for it.

2. That we may be all of one mind in these desirable matters, we must labour for those gracious qualities and dispositions, that can alone fit us for it; such as meekness, humility, submission to superiors, and the like; which excellent graces and virtues will mightily conduce to this union of heart and mind, and it is the lack of them that creates all the discord and dissension that is among us.

If you observe it, you shall find most men commending peace, and speaking up for unity; but the mischief is, they must all have it in their own way, though ever so different and contrary one to the other; they are willing enough that all men should be of one mind, but then every man must be of theirs, or else they cannot agree with them. It is this puts all the difficulty into this duty, and renders it in a great measure impracticable.

Now, there is but one expedient to cure this evil, and that is, for men to think modestly and soberly of themselves, to allow their teachers and governors to know more, and to be wiser than they; and so to submit their private judgment to the public wisdom. By thus hearkening and yielding to those whom God hath appointed to teach and direct us, we may soon come to be of one mind, but without it never. Which made the apostle exhort all Christians, 'not to think more highly of themselves

than they ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath given to every one the measure of faith.' Rom. xii. 3. In a word, then, let me bespeak you, in the words of the same apostle: 'If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and of one mind.' Phil. ii. 1, 2. So shall we become one flock and one fold, under one great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE v. 1—12.—*It came to pass, that as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesareth, and saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets: and he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's,* &c.

THE people, moved by the Divine discourses and miraculous cures of our blessed Saviour, flocked in great multitudes to him from all parts; and, being a teacher come from heaven to shew the way thither, they pressed hard through crowds and throngs to hear him; as he that comes with glad tidings shall be sure to have many followers.

Some of those that thus 'pressed upon him,' had been the disciples of the scribes and Pharisees, who having, as they were informed, corrupted and falsified the law, they desired 'to hear the pure word of God' out of Christ's mouth, and therefore strove hard to come near him to that end.

The place where 'he stood,' when they came to him, was 'by the lake of Gennesareth;' called sometimes 'the sea of Galilee,' Matt. iv. 18; sometimes 'the lake or sea of Tiberias,' Matt. xiv. 34; and here 'the lake of Gennesareth.' At our Saviour's standing there, 'he saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.' These 'two ships,' or boats, belonged the one to Andrew and Peter, the other to James and John, the sons of Zebedee: and these were the 'fishermen' here mentioned. But there seems to be some small difference between the evangelists, St. Matthew and St. Luke, in the relating of this story of Christ's coming to these two ships or boats: St. Matthew tells us, that Peter and Andrew were 'casting their nets into the sea or lake,' as if they were actually fishing,' Matt. iv. 18; and that James and John were in their boats 'mending their nets,' ver. 21. St. Luke here speaks indifferently of them, that they left their boats, and were washing or scouring their nets, as if they had left off fishing for that time; though they might meet together

again a little after about the same business, and so both may very well be thought to consist together. Again, St. Matthew speaks of 'calling Peter and Andrew, who straightway left their nets and followed him,' Matt. iv. 20; and that he went his way, and seeing James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, he called them sometime after. But St. Luke takes no notice of two different calls, but mentions them as done together. Now these small differences may be easily supposed between the one that speaks briefly and concisely of the matter, and the other that speaks more largely of the manner and circumstances of the whole action. But to proceed to what is more material.

It is said in the next verse, that 'Christ entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land: and he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.' The multitude followed our Saviour to the shore; he considered how he might instruct them in the best manner that the place where they were would admit of: and to that end he went into St. Peter's ship, which was then ready to receive him; and having placed the people to the best advantage of hearing him, he discoursed before them of things that were of the greatest use and benefit to them.

What the particular matter or subject of this discourse was, is not here set down, but no doubt related to the affairs of the kingdom of heaven, and the great concerns of their souls; and perhaps was the heads of his divine sermon on the mount, which he preached to them soon after. By this, we learn the great willingness of our Saviour to teach and to do good to all mankind, for he embraced all opportunities of imparting to them his Father's mind, and improving them in all divine and heavenly wisdom; and thereby hath given us an example of counselling, comforting, and instructing one another; and, to the best of our knowledge and power, helping forward the salvation of all men.

'Now, when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.' When he had ended his discourse, he put Peter upon the business of his calling; and being a fisherman, he bids him put forth into the sea, and cast out their nets for a draught of fishes: whereby he shewed his approbation of men's diligence and industry in their several stations and callings, willing them carefully and seasonably to follow the business of them, that they may receive a blessing from their honest and innocent endeavours.

But 'Simon answering, said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.' His bad success had mightily discouraged him, and made him backward to the using of any farther endeavours. Most men are unwilling to labour in vain, or to follow business, when they see nothing comes of it; but this is, many times, through their own folly and default, they have not things so soon, and in that measure and quantity that they expect, and so cease their endeavours after them.

Some lay aside their prayers, because they do not find a present answer to them; and others neglect and refuse to labour, because they do not instantly reap the desired fruits of it: whereas by a little patience and perseverance in their duty, they may obtain more than they could reasonably expect; 'For we shall reap, (saith the apostle,) if we faint not.' And so it proved in this case: St. Peter felt something of this impatience and distrust, and, by the fruitless labour and toil of one night, was almost discouraged from any farther attempt, till, awakened by our Saviour's call, he renews his endeavours, and falls to his work again; 'Nevertheless, (saith he,) at thy word, I will let down the net.' Christ's word quickened both his diligence and his hopes; and that made him readily obey it, by letting down his net, which he had washed and prepared for a better opportunity. But what was the effect of this cheerful compliance? Why, that the next verse tells us; 'When they had thus done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, so that their net brake.' We shall lose nothing by obeying and trusting our Lord; yea, we shall be infinite gainers by both. For the disciples here who had toiled all night, and caught nothing; no, not so much as one single fish; by believing and doing as Christ commanded them, took up such vast numbers of fishes as brake their net, though before washed and mended for the draught: a seasonable encouragement to all Christ's servants to go on cheerfully in the duties of their respective callings; not to despond after some unsuccessful toils and trials; nor to desist from the works of their vocation for any seeming discouragements or disappointments they may meet with in it.

But what did the disciples do upon this extraordinary draught of fishes, and the breaking of their nets? Why, 'they beckoned to their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.' They were more oppressed now with the number and weight of the fish taken, than they were before with the want of them; and therefore called to their companions for assistance, under the burden of their abundance. They beckoned to the partners in the other ship to come and help them, not in their poverty, but their plenty, to share in their prosperity, and to ease them of some of the care and trouble of it. To which they readily came, as most men are willing to repair to and partake of plenty; the rich have many friends, and they that have store of provisions, shall never want company to receive and consume them. When they in the other ship came to these disciples, they found them labouring under the burden of affluence and plenty, which was so great, that they could not well bear nor manage; for they found the number of the fish taken at one draught sufficient to fill both the ships, and the weight of them great enough to sink both the vessels. Prosperity is sometimes more dangerous than adversity, and more are overwhelmed with

plenty, than are sunk with poverty. A heathen could observe, that few men can καταπέπσαι μέγαν ὄλθον, digest great prosperity; it exposes to difficulties and dangers that are not easily conquered; and more men perish by luxury than pine away by lack. The disciples here were in greater danger by the fulness, than they were by the emptiness of their vessels; they who before swam about with pleasure, were here sinking with pressure, and called for assistance, not so much in time of need, as in time of abundance. Now here we may remark two or three things that may be worth observation:—

(1.) That our Saviour suited his miracles and wonderful works to the employments and necessities of those with whom he had to do; as being more likely to work upon them than such as had no reference to either. Christ having here to do with fishermen, whom he was about to convert, and call to be his disciples, he thought he could not do better with them, than to take them in their own way, and by a miraculous draught of fishes, especially at a time when they could take none themselves, to convince them of his divine power: by this they perceived him to be Lord of the sea as well as land, and that he had all the creatures in both at his call and command, and could bring them together at all times and places, both when and where he pleases. By this astonishing draught of fishes, he caught the disciples too, and inclosed them in the same net: a draught it was, far above and beside their expectation, and such a one as they knew nothing but the commanding power of God was able to bring to pass; and this gave them such a convincing evidence of his Messiahship, that they ever after devoted themselves to his service, as we shall see after. Again,—

At another time, we read that Peter seeing our Saviour walking on the sea as on dry ground, and that, too, in a great storm, entreated that he might come to him on the water. Christ calling him to him, he went out of the ship, and walked on the sea to meet his Master, who, to try his faith, permitted him to sink a little under water; which made him, in a passionate fright, to cry out, 'Lord, save me;' whereupon Christ took him by the hand, and set him again on the top of the water, with this mild rebuke, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' At which Peter, and all that saw it, were astonished at the miracle, and brake out into this confession, 'Of a truth thou art the Son of God.' Matt. xiv. *32*, *33*.

Thus, having to do with seamen and fishermen, he treated them with arguments taken from their own calling and element, and convinced them of the divinity of his person by miracles done in and upon the sea: for they were all amazed when they saw the winds and the sea obey him, and that he commanded not only the fowls of the air, but the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

And as he accommodated his miracles sometimes to men's callings, so did he at other times to men's necessities, which are

apt likewise to make deep impressions upon them. So when great multitudes that followed our Saviour in the wilderness were in great want, and almost famished with hunger, he multiplied five loaves and two little fishes to the feeding of five thousand men, beside women and children; and when they were all filled, there was more left than was at first set before them. Which miracle so astonished them, that they all cried out, 'Of a truth this is that prophet that was to come into the world.' This is the first remark on this miracle. The

(2d) Is, from St. Peter's, and the other disciples, complaining of their bad success, we may observe the proneness of mankind to murmur and distrust God upon very slight occasions: we find here that when Jesus bid Simon to 'launch out into the deep, and to cast out their net into the sea,' he replied that he had done that already, but in vain, and had been fishing all the night to no purpose; and if they could not succeed then in the night, the most proper time for that employment, there can be but little hope of speeding better now, it being probably high noon: as if Christ would put them upon labour in vain, and could not give success to the work which he sets them about. Many are apt to distrust and complain without a cause; the Israelites were still murmuring and complaining, though they were daily fed with manna and quails in the wilderness: and too many still, upon every little appearance of bad weather, are apt to despond and murmur, as if they were to be starved and undone; which is a great distrust of God Almighty's Providence, and highly provoking to him.

(3.) We may observe hence, that though good men may be liable to these despondencies, yet, by a little consideration, they soon deliver themselves from them. We find here that St. Peter was almost discouraged by the bad success of one whole night's labour, yet, nevertheless, at Christ's word, he let down the net; and his obedience was well rewarded, for the net immediately inclosed so great a multitude of fishes, that it began to break, insomuch that they were forced to call to their partners, that were in a ship hard by, to come in to their assistance; and both the ships were so deeply laden, that they could hardly keep them from sinking: an example great enough to keep us from sinking under any disappointments in the way of our ordinary callings, and to encourage us to go on in them according to God's word; and by waiting God's time, we shall find a blessing ample enough to reward all our industry.

But to go on to the effect of this miracle: how did Peter behave himself upon the sight of this miraculous draught of fishes? Why, the next words tell us, that 'when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!' He was so surprised at the sight, that, reflecting on his former distrust and backwardness, he thought himself unworthy of his presence; and so, with a profound

humility and dread, desired him to depart from him: 'for he was astonished, (say the following words,) and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes that they had taken:' meaning, that what he said before of his departing from him, proceeded not from a desire of being rid of his company, but from a sense of his own sinfulness, that made him unworthy of it, and a certain dread and amazement, which the sight of the miracle and his presence had wrought in him. The glory of his person, and the greatness of his power had so dazzled and confounded him, that he was not able to bear it, and therefore threw himself down at his feet, and prayed him to go from him.

In the same degree of astonishment 'were also James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon;' being all struck with the same admiration and amazement at the lustre of his person and actions.

But to remove St. Peter's fears, and to deliver him from his astonishment, 'Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men:' be not frighted or dismayed, for I have higher and better work for thee, more happy and honourable employment to set thee about; for thou shalt no longer busy thyself in catching silly fish, but thou shalt catch men, and bring great shoals of converts and proselytes into thy net: and these, too, shall be caught, not as the fish are, to their destruction, but they shall be taken and kept alive, and nourished to eternal salvation. From henceforth he dealt no more with those mute and silly animals, but conversed with men, bringing them in to the obedience of the gospel, and catching their souls to eternal life. And this miraculous draught of fishes, which he saw done before him, was but an emblem or presage of a richer and more plentiful prey, that he should have in taking of men; which accordingly came to pass soon after: for at one sermon he caught no less than 'three thousand souls,' who all 'gladly received his word, and were baptized;' as we read, Acts ii. 41. Neither were these words spoken to Peter only, but to the other disciples, to whom our Saviour likewise promised to make them fishers of men. Matt. iv. 18. And these also drew in many converts, and 'daily added to the church such as should be saved.' And being thus encouraged by our Saviour's call and command, 'when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.' The common form of speech, used in our Saviour's calling his disciples, was 'Follow me,' as may be seen in sundry places of the gospel; and their compliance with it is usually expressed by their 'leaving all, and following him.' So it was here, Christ had no sooner spoke the word, but they readily obeyed, by forsaking all, and following him; for as soon as they came to land, they disposed of their concerns and goods into the hands of friends, (as all prudent men are wont to do,) and immediately 'forsook all:' that is, they left their trade, with all the business of it, and all farther expectations of benefit by it, and cast themselves upon Christ's

care and disposal of them. And well enough they might: for he, who with a word's speaking, could draw up such vast quantities of fish, at one draught, could provide better for them than they could for themselves; and he that could feed five thousand persons with a few loaves and two little fishes, was able to take care of them, and would not suffer them to want. But however that were, they cast off all worldly cares, and devoted themselves to his service by 'following him.'

But what is here meant by their following of Christ? Why, three things are manifestly intended by it.

1st, The following of his person, by attending upon him.

2dly, The following of his doctrine, by learning of him. And,—

3dly, The following of his example, by imitating of him. For the

1st, The disciples were the constant followers and attendants upon his person; for they went up and down with him wherever he went, they were the eye-witnesses of his miracles, and the ear-witnesses of his discourses: and though he sometimes withdrew from them into places of solitude and retirement upon some extraordinary occasions, yet, for the most part, they were daily companions with him, and the constant spectators both of his glories and troubles; as we may read at large in all the four evangelists. This way of following Christ was peculiar to the apostles and first disciples, who had the honour of living, seeing, and conversing with him during his abode upon earth; which was a privilege not to be enjoyed by any since his ascension into heaven. But there are two ways of following Christ still attainable by us; in both which senses we are styled his followers. As,—

2dly, By following his doctrine, and learning of him: this privilege the apostles had by receiving the word from Christ's own mouth; but we have it at second hand, by receiving it from them who have handed it down to us. However, the doctrine is the same in both, and we are as well taught by him now as they were then. He that teaches another, and instils his instructions into him, is said to be his master; and they that are taught by him, and embrace his tenets, are styled his followers. Now we are bid as much to 'learn of him' as his first disciples; and his apostles inculcate upon us the same lessons as he did upon them; to wit, that 'the same mind should be in us as was in Christ Jesus: so that as he was equally a teacher to them and us, so are we equally his disciples and followers as well as they; and so we may all well be, for he was a 'teacher come from God,' and was alone able to deliver 'the words of eternal life.' He hath given us the best instructions and assistances too that were ever communicated to the world, and hath delivered the most sublime and heavenly truths that we are capable of receiving; by learning whereof we cannot miss the way to eternal life; and so, by embracing of them, we are truly and properly said to be his followers.

3dly, To be a follower of Christ, is to follow his example, and

to act by the pattern that he hath set us: he that treads in the same steps after another, is said to follow him; and he that takes Christ for his director and guide, and walks even as he walked, may be justly reckoned in the number of his followers. Now Christ hath given us the best example for our imitation; he hath gone every step of our way to heaven before us, to the intent, (saith the apostle,) 'that we should follow his steps, who did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth.' He hath set before us the most excellent pattern of love, meekness, humility, and patience; and, indeed, of all other virtues; in which we are bid to 'be followers of him as dear children.' And when we are arrived to that, we may be said, with the disciples in the text, to 'forsake all, and follow him.'

This is the whole drift and design of this day's gospel; which having improved all along as I have gone in it, there can be no need of any farther application. Briefly, then, let us learn from hence,—

1st, To confirm our faith and hope in our blessed Saviour, and in all times of difficulty and disappointment steadfastly to believe and stick to him.

2dly, From this instance of his miraculous power and goodness, learn to go on diligently and cheerfully in the duties of your several callings, and, in the use of all lawful means, firmly trust and rely upon his Providence for the issue and good success of them.

3dly, Let us, from hence learn, to be constant and faithful followers of Christ, both in his doctrine and example; so shall we, who now follow him in grace and holiness here, hereafter follow him to glory. Which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ROM. vi. 3—12.—*Know ye not, that so many of us, as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life,* &c.

THE collect for this day minds us of the good things which God hath prepared for them that love him, which are, indeed, such as pass man's understanding; and from thence teaches us to pray to him to pour into our hearts such love towards him, that we, loving him above all things, may obtain his promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Now, because these good things are obtained for us by the death of Christ, and the promises of them depend much upon his resurrection; therefore the epistle for the day mentions our conformity to both, as the best means to procure a title to them, and

to secure an interest in them; which things are represented to us in our baptism, and the profession made in it obliges us to them.

As for our conformity to the death of Christ, the apostle asks the question in the beginning, 'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ, were baptized into his death?' meaning, that it was a thing well known among Christians, that the immersion in baptism referred to the death of Christ: the putting the person baptized into the water, represented and proclaimed his death; and the plunging him over head and ears in the water, according to the custom of those countries, signified their being buried with Christ. Therefore, (saith the apostle in the next verse,) 'we are buried with him by baptism into death:' our being dipped in water in the font being a sacred figure of his being dipped in blood, and laid up in the grave; which, in the next verse, is styled, our being planted together in the likeness of his death, that, like as Christ was swallowed up of death, and buried in the earth, so we are overwhelmed in baptism, and buried in the water.

This is briefly our conformity to Christ's death, as it is represented in baptism; the end whereof is to mortify and kill sin in us: and therefore anciently they who were baptized were wont to put off their garments, as a sign or token of their putting off the whole body of sin, and being dead to it; as we shall see after.

As for our conformity to Christ's resurrection, that likewise is here set forth as represented in baptism; for as the being covered all over in water, according to the ancient ceremony, signified the being dead and buried with Christ; so the rising up again out of the water, signified their rising again with Christ: 'that like as he was raised from the dead by the glory of his Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life;' and as we 'are planted in the likeness of his death, so are we in the likeness of his resurrection:' the dipping of the body under the water, and the rising of it again out of the water in baptism, being lively symbols and figures of both.

But what were the ends or designed effects of this likeness or conformity to Christ's death and resurrection? Why, that the following part of this epistle will inform us. And,—

First, The end of our conformity to Christ's death was (as I hinted before) the killing of sin in us, and the forsaking of it in the whole course of our conversation: so the next words speak of it as a thing well known and taken for granted; 'Knowing this, (saith the apostle,) that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.' Where, by the 'old man,' we are to understand that corruption of nature which we derived from our first parents, whereby all the faculties of the soul, and the members of the body, became the instruments and servants of sin. This depravedness of nature is in Scripture often called the old man, which is corrupt according to the sinful lusts. Now, the end of Christ's

death was to crucify this old man; and our conforming to it, is to have it crucified with him: so St. Paul declares of himself, 'I am crucified with Christ.' Gal. ii. 20. Because the world is apt to draw us into the love and service of the old man, he tells us that the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world, Gal. vi. 14; withal minding us, that 'they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.' Gal. v. 24. And all this, 'that the body of sin may be destroyed in us.' St. Paul complained of this body of sin as the greatest burden he groaned under, and of which he most desired to be eased, saying, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?' Rom. vii. 24. Now, Christ, by his death, hath delivered us from this body of death; and our being baptized into his death at once represents and entitles us to that deliverance, by which we are so far made free, 'that henceforth we should not serve sin:' which freedom hath delivered us both from the power and the guilt of sin.

As for the power of sin, that is destroyed for us by the power of divine grace; insomuch that 'sin shall no longer reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof.' Sin indeed domineers and rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience; it hath set up its empire or kingdom within them, and so made them slaves and vassals to their vile affections; but this kingdom is pulled down and destroyed by the influence of the Divine Spirit: so that now, if we manfully withstand it, it can have no dominion over us, and, without our own yielding and consent, it cannot prevail against us; its power is broken, and the grace of God is sufficient to fortify us against its strongest temptations; which made St. Paul say, that 'he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him.'

And as the power of sin is destroyed, so is the guilt of it removed by the death of Christ; the sting of it is pluckt out, and it can now do us no more harm than a dead lion or a painted serpent; the cry of it is silenced by the blood of Christ, and its obligation to punishment wholly taken off by his pardoning grace: for 'there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.' Rom. viii. 1.

These things are all confirmed to us in the next words; 'For he that is dead is freed from sin.' As a man that is dead is free from the dominion of any that before had power over him, so he that is dead to sin, is delivered from the dominion and power of it: all human slavery ends with death; for then, as Job speaks, 'the servant is free from his master.' Job iii. 19. So all spiritual slavery and thraldom to our ghostly enemies is ended with this spiritual death: he that is dead and buried with Christ by baptism, is no more to lead or continue in any sinful course, than a dead man can live again his former life. So St. Peter tells us, that as 'Christ suffered in the flesh for sin, so we that suffer and are

dead with him are to cease from sin, that we should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2. By all which it manifestly appears, that as the design of Christ's death was to destroy sin, so the end of our being baptized into his death, is to kill sin in us, to take away the power and dominion of it, that it may no longer reign in our bodies, or bring damnation to the soul. This is briefly our conformity to Christ's death, by dying unto sin, for which he died, and burying our iniquities in the same grave in which he was laid.

Secondly, As for our conformity to Christ's resurrection, and the end of that, both these consist in living unto God, and in walking before him in newness of life. The proving and clearing of this is indeed the main design of the epistle for this day: for as the belief of Christ's death, into which we are baptized, implies our being dead unto sin, for which he died; so the belief of his resurrection, which is likewise declared and professed in baptism, implies our living unto righteousness, of which his rising again from the dead was both a sign and seal. So the words already discoursed of, and those that follow, manifestly import. 'The newness of life' before mentioned, ver. 4, implies such a new regenerate life, answerable to Christ's resurrection, as consists in a course of sanctity and religious walking with God. 'The being planted in the likeness of his resurrection,' mentioned ver. 5, signifies our obligation to imitate and answer that in the fruits of a new and holy life, of which his resurrection was a lively image or resemblance: for as the corruption of our nature, that we received from Adam, is called 'the old man,' which we are required to put off; so the regeneration of it, that we have by Christ, is called the 'new creature,' which we are commanded to put on. 'As in Adam all die,' both a natural and spiritual death, 'so in Christ shall all be made alive,' by a life of grace here, and of glory hereafter. This is the apostle's reasoning in the next words; 'Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him;' that is, if we truly and sincerely perform our part in imitating of Christ's death, by dying unto sin, and transcribe his resurrection by rising to a new and holy life, we shall, together with him, have a joyful resurrection to eternal life: if the death of Christ have that good effect upon us, as to weaken the strength, and extinguish the life of sin in us, nothing can hinder us from living unto God here, and with him for ever hereafter.

But lest any should mistake here, and think that the leaving of sin for awhile would sufficiently answer the end of Christ's death, or presume that a few acts of a holy life, performed now and then, would entitle them to all the benefits and privileges of his resurrection; the apostle would have them know other and better things; and to that end acquaints them in the next verse, 'That Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him:' meaning, that

the copy of Christ's death, which we are to follow and write after, teaches us so to die unto sin, as to live no longer therein, nor to suffer any sin to have any more dominion over us; and the copy of his resurrection, which we are to transcribe and imitate, directs us so to lead a life of grace, as not to come under the power of spiritual death any more: 'for in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' The sense whereof is, that when Christ died for our sin, he did it but once for all, and never underwent that death again: even so we who are baptized into his death, should bid a total and final adieu to all sin, and never more be brought into bondage to any. But when he rose from the dead, he rose not to one single act of life and no more, or so as to live awhile, and then to cease from it again; but he rose to an eternal, immortal, endless life, that fadeth not away: so our rising with Christ, and living unto God, betokens our rising to a spiritual life of grace, that never ends, but flows into an eternal life of glory, persevering here in all virtuous and godly living, according to the precept and example of our Saviour Christ, who rose again never to die more, on purpose to quicken us to everlasing life. In short, the example of Christ's death and resurrection, to which we are here bid to conform, teaches us two very excellent and useful lessons.

1. That our dying unto or forsaking of sin, must be total or universal, from all sin, without allowing ourselves in any.

2. That our living unto righteousness must be constant, and hold out to the end.

1. I say, our forsaking of sin must be total and universal, extending to all sin, without the least indulgence to any. This was the end of Christ's death, so to kill all sin in us, that none might continue or revive in us any more: 'How shall we that are dead to sin, (saith the apostle,) live any longer therein?' A dead man, you know, hath no sensation or perception of any thing; and if we are dead to all sin, as Christ's death teaches us to be, we shall have no motion or inclination to any. There are some who can well enough dispense with this or that sin, which crosses not their interest or humour, but stick close to others, that better administer to their lusts or designs; and what they seem to take away from one vice, they make up with advantage to another. The apostle speaks of some who 'abhorred idols,' but could greedily enough 'commit sacrilege,' Rom. ii.; and we have known many, great enemies indeed to idolatry, who yet are well enough reconciled to schism and sacrilege. Such as these are not dead, but alive unto sin, to which they most closely adhere; and are not so much alive, as dead unto righteousness, whose ways they utterly forsake. Such partial and nominal Christians, like those in the church of Sardis, have a name to live, but are indeed dead as to all the purposes of a spiritual life; which will not permit in us the love or practice of any one known sin, but lays the axe to the very root, and cuts down all the

branches of iniquity. In a word, we are to imitate Christ's death, by dying unto all sin, not sparing Agag, or any darling impiety, but laying aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us.

2. Our living unto righteousness must be constant and persevering unto the end; not living to it awhile, and then leaving it, but making it the work and business of our whole life, and continuing faithful in it, even unto death. There are some who seem zealous and good Christians for a time, running with great alacrity and cheerfulness the ways of God's commandments; but after a while flag, and tire, and forsake all: 'Ye did run well, (saith the apostle to the Galatians,) who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?' that is, ye began and set out well in your christian race, receiving the gospel as it was preached unto you, and so were in a good way of faith, and by it went happily forward towards the mark of your high calling in Christ Jesus; but you have faltered since, and not continued on in that course, and so have lost the prize for not holding out to the end of the race: and so shall we too, if we persevere not, and keep not in it to the last. 'You shall reap,' saith St. Paul, a good crop of glory, 'if ye faint not;' but if you give out and grow weary, ye shall reap only the sad fruit of shame and confusion. In short, you must live on a life of grace to the end, if ever ye hope to arrive to a life of glory.

This is the sense and drift of the epistle for this day; which shews us how we are to imitate Christ's death, by dying unto sin, and likewise how we are to shew forth the virtue of his resurrection, by living unto righteousness.

The application of the whole discourse, the apostle gives us in the last verse of the epistle, saying, 'Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;' that is, Take this home to yourselves, and count upon it, that by your baptism you are in a state of death, as to all sinful practices, never to love or live in such courses any more; and that by Christ's resurrection you are raised to a new state of life, to be led in the practice of holiness and virtue, which you are to live for ever, without ever returning again to any vile or vicious courses. And this 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' that is, by the aid and assistance of his Holy Spirit, who is both the author and cherisher of this spiritual life, from whom, as from the root and foundation, all our graces spring.

All that remains is, to exhort you to answer these two great ends and effects of Christ's death and resurrection, by a total abandoning of all kinds of sin, and by a constant practice of all sorts of virtue. These are the two parts of that sanctification which we have by baptism; they are commonly expressed by mortification, which is a dying unto sin; and vivification, which is a living unto righteousness. These likewise are the two great

parts of repentance, which is a turning from sin unto God. They are expressed in Scripture, sometimes by 'eschewing evil and doing good;' sometimes by 'abhorring that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good;' sometimes by 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world:' all which are but different expressions of what we are called upon to do this day, namely, to die unto sin, and to live unto God.

Let this, therefore, be henceforth our main study and exercise. To which end, let us often meditate on the merits and virtue of Christ's death, and the power of his resurrection to work these things in us: the one to mortify and kill sin in us, which is to put off the old man; the other to quicken and enliven our graces, which is to put on the new man, that after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This is the great work and duty of repentance, to which we are so often called and encouraged by many promises; and the neglect whereof is so severely threatened with many punishments. 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' said St. John, upon our Saviour's first coming into the world; that being his main design in it, to bless mankind by turning them from their iniquities. 'Repent, and be converted, (saith St. Peter,) that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord,' Acts iii. 19; that being the only means to procure our pardon, and to gain admission into the presence of God. 'Except ye repent, (saith our Saviour,) ye shall all likewise perish.' Luke xiii. 5. All which are so many warnings and exhortations to the great duty of this day, viz., to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness. I shall conclude all with the following words of our apostle: 'Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof;' neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God: so shall you ere long receive a crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge shall give you at the last day; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. v. 20—27. — *Jesus said to his disciples, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you,* &c.

THIS gospel for the day contains another part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he vindicates the law from all false

glosses, and refines it into a more pure and perfect rule of life and manners. He had before told his disciples, that 'he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it,' ver. 17. He freed them indeed from the rites and ceremonies, but not from the rules and precepts of Moses's law. Instead of loosening the obligation, he expected a stricter obedience and conformity to it. And because the Scribes and Pharisees had corrupted the law by false glosses, and their lives by false and glozing pretences, he endeavours here to reform and regulate both; beginning with this caution,—

'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The Scribes and Pharisees were the great doctors and rabbis among the Jews; the one being the name of an office, and the other of a sect, and both eminent teachers and expounders of the law; which they had done so falsely and corruptly, that our Saviour found it necessary to expound it over again, to rescue it from their evil interpretations, and to bring it up to its just height and perfection, as may be seen in the following part of the chapter.

The corruptions and false constructions they made of the law, were such as these: they taught, 1. That if men kept to the letter of the law, which they called *justi ad legem*, it was sufficient, though they minded not the true intent and spiritual meaning of it: 2. If they polished the outward garb, and appeared righteous before men, it mattered not how false and unjust they were within: 3. If men abstained from the open grosser acts of sin, they need not trouble themselves about the more secret motives and occasions of it: 4. If men performed the external acts of religion, it was needless to concern themselves about the principle, end, or manner of performing them.

These, and such other like these, were the doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees, which they taught others, and practised themselves; by which they made void the law of God, and rendered the commandments of none effect by their traditions.

This was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, which had many flaws and imperfections in it; for it was merely external, partial, and hypocritical; it dwelt only in the face and outward appearance, without any truth or reality at all within. It consisted in slight observances, and uncommanded austerities, and was attended with arrogance, pride, and an insolent contempt of others. They abstained from some sins, which they could well enough dispense with, and allowed themselves in others more crying and enormous. They performed some duties, that suited well enough with their humour and interest, and neglected others of greater weight and necessity; paying tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, and at the same time omitting the weightier matters of the law. In a word, their religion was founded on bad principles, carried on by bad means, and directed to bad ends; for their acts of piety and mercy were all done for vanity and ostentation,

and in all things they consulted more the praise of men, than the glory of God.

Now our Saviour tells us, that our 'righteousness must exceed this righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees,' or else we shall never 'enter into the kingdom' of grace here, or of glory hereafter. But wherein must our righteousness exceed theirs? Why,—

1st, In the truth and sincerity of it; for God 'loveth truth in the inner parts;' he looketh not as man looketh, to the outward appearance, but beholds the heart, and receives or rejects us by the truth or falsehood of that.

2dly, In the extent and integrity of it: it must reach to all God's commandments, not picking and choosing as the Pharisees did, who made the keeping of one law to compound for the breach of another; but we must pay an uniform and universal obedience to all God's precepts, being all stamped with the same authority, and having the same equity and reward; and 'then shall we not be ashamed, when we have respect to all his commandments.'

3dly, Our righteousness must exceed theirs in the lowliness and humility of it; disclaiming all its worth, and arrogating nothing as due to it. The Pharisees trusted to their own righteousness, and claimed the reward from the merit of their own works; but we are to account ours as filthy rags, and to desire to be found only in the robes of Christ's righteousness: when we have done all, we are to reckon ourselves but unprofitable servants, and trust only to Christ's merits for our justification. Again, the Pharisees boasted of their own righteousness, that they were better than other men, looking upon themselves as the only favourites of heaven, and despising others as only men of the earth: whereas we are to be lowly in heart and mind, esteeming others better than ourselves; and then shall we rise highest in God's opinion, when we are lowest in our own.

Lastly, Our righteousness must exceed theirs in the purity of its end and intention: they only courted the honour and applause of men in all that they did, and so had all their reward from them; but we are to direct all our aims and intentions to the glory of God, and that will best tend to and promote our own.

Thus we see wherein we are to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, together with the penalty of falling short of it. Now to help us herein, our Saviour detects their corruption of several laws by their traditions, and directs to the true meaning and just extent of them.

The third commandment they perverted by two false glosses: the one, that the forbidding of taking God's name in vain, prohibited only the swearing by the awful name of God, but permitted them in lesser matters to swear by his creatures, as by the heavens, by the earth, by Jerusalem, by the altar, the temple, their head, and the like; all which they taught had no guilt

in them, and signified nothing: the other was, that the law against swearing prohibited only forswearing or false swearing, and that too in matters of great moment, but extended not to things of lesser consequence, and so let them loose to all vain and idle swearing; both which our Saviour condemned, by saying, 'Swear not at all,' ver. 33, 34.

The fifth commandment they evacuated by a gift called *Corban*, of which they gave a double interpretation; the one signifying an oath against relieving of parents, which they that had taken were (as they taught) excused thereby from relieving them; the other was interpreting *Corban* of a gift consecrated unto God, signifying, that if they had consecrated their substance unto God, or to his temple, they were excused from relieving their parents out of it, being already devoted to God's service, and so may be more profitable to them than otherwise: both these ways they made the law of God of no effect by their traditions. Matt. xv.

Next, our Saviour vindicates the sixth commandment from the wrong interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, in the following words of this day's gospel: 'Ye have heard (saith he) that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment.' Where, by them of old time, we are to understand Moses and the prophets, as we read, Exod. xx. and Deut. v.: where this precept against killing is extant. This the Scribes and Pharisees restrained only to actual murder, or shedding of blood; and so maiming, wounding, and other acts of violence that came short of murder, with all the occasions leading thereunto, went free; and the 'danger of the judgment,' or punishments annexed to it, they taught were incurred by none, but such as actually took away the life of another, and imbrued his hands in his blood.

'But I say unto you (saith Christ) that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say unto his brother, Racha, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.' Where he enlarges the sense of this law, and shews it to extend to all rash anger, hatred, and reproachful speeches, which lead to murder, and often occasion slaughter and bloodshed.

Now, here we may observe the three different degrees of the sins leading to murder, together with the three different degrees of the punishments assigned to them. The three degrees of the sins or occasions of murder, are 'causeless anger,' opprobrious words, by calling men 'racha,' and 'thou fool.' The three degrees of the punishments assigned to them are 'the danger of the judgment, the danger of the council,' and 'the danger of hell-fire.' All which will require a little explication.

(1.) As for 'causeless anger;' that is, when men are moved to passion for no cause at all, or on a very slight occasion, which is as good as none; this often happens to fiery and hasty spirits,

which are inflamed for trifles, and break out into rage upon little or no provocation. A sudden disgust, a jealous surmise, a hasty word, shall make some persons fly out into an absurd, violent, and unaccountable passion, and catch fire at such small sparks, as are better quenched than kindled; that is, at such light matters, as a wise man would rather pass by than resent.

Again, anger is causeless, when, though there may be some cause, yet the passion runs higher than the cause can warrant; when it grows immoderate, and transports beyond the bounds of reason and religion. Certainly all anger that exceeds the merits of the cause, is, so far, to be justly reckoned causeless; in which case, as the passion offers some violence to nature, so does it often occasion some external violence and mischief, as may be seen in the conversation of furious persons.

Once more, anger is causeless, when it lasts longer than the cause continues, when it refuses to be appeased or reconciled, and retains secret grudges and animosities; which frequently turns to hatred, malice, and desires of revenge. For which reason the wise man tells us, that anger resteth in the bosom of fools, where it is apt to boil up and break out in malicious and murderous designs: and therefore the apostle wills us not to 'sin in our anger,' by keeping it too long, nor to suffer the 'sun to go down upon our wrath;' for that is to 'give place to the devil,' who is ever ready to carry such passionate men into all manner of mischief: for this reason it is, that our Saviour here condemns all causeless anger, as an occasion of killing and murder.

Now the punishment here assigned to it, is to be in danger of the judgment: 'I say unto you, he that is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment;' that is, not only of future judgment, but of a present judgment here in this world; which, in this place, is meant of incurring the censure and sentence of the Sanhedrim, of which there were two courts among the Jews, called the lesser and the greater Sandhedrim, the one consisting of 23 judges, the other of 71; and both had the cognizance of criminal causes, and could pass sentence on malefactors, though not equally and alike, there lying an appeal from the one to the other. And the judgment here threatened to causeless anger, is that of the first and inferior court, of whose sentence it was in danger.

(2.) Another sin forbidden here as an occasion of murder, is contumelious and reviling language; and this is an effect or consequent of the former; for where rash anger is kindled and flames in the breast, there it breaks out in the tongue by contumelies and reproaches, and vents itself in violent and virulent speeches; two of which are here mentioned.

1. The calling his brother 'racha,' which is an Hebrew or Syriac word, and signifies a vain, witless, and worthless fellow; a term of great derision and reproach, and is, indeed, a 'setting at nought our brother:' which naturally incenses and creates those

feuds and quarrels that often end in slaughter and bloodshed. Now, this being a farther step to murder, has a higher degree of punishment assigned to it; and that is, to be 'in danger of the council;' which was to be summoned before the higher court of Sanhedrim, who had a power of inflicting greater punishments on such capital offenders. Not that every calling our brother 'racha,' from a just rebuke of some misunderstanding or miscarriage, fell under their heavy sentence; for St. James thus called his brother 'racha,' chap. ii. 20: Wilt thou know, 'O vain man,' in the Hebrew 'racha,' 'that faith without works is dead?' But it is only the calling him so out of an evil and malicious intention, with a design to undervalue and affront him, that incurs this penalty.

2. The saying to our brother, 'Thou fool,' is yet a higher provocation, and not easily borne; for it is the greatest reflection upon men's understanding and credit, of both which men generally are and ought to be very tender. It is the calling him not only a witless, but a wicked fellow; which deeply wounds his reputation, and arraigns his whole life; and this occasions very great resentments, which frequently lead men to outrage and violence. And therefore a greater punishment is annexed to this than any of the former; and that is, to 'be in danger of hell-fire;' which signifies not only the incurring of the temporal punishments of this life, but the eternal torments hereafter in hell, represented by the fire of Tophet in the valley of Hinnom. But here we may note again, that it is not every calling another 'fool,' that brings men into this danger; for Solomon calls the wicked man 'fool' throughout the whole book of Proverbs; and St. Paul said to him that doubted of the resurrection, 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' 1 Cor. xv. 36. And he elsewhere rebuked the Galatians, saying, 'O foolish Galatians,' asking, 'who had bewitched them, that they should not obey the truth?' Gal. iii. 1. But the saying 'Thou fool' here, is with a desire or design of vilifying, deriding, or scoffing at another; which moves to vindication and revenge, and is many times an occasion of murder; for which reason our Saviour interprets it as forbidden in this sixth commandment, that says, 'Thou shalt not kill.'

And therefore our blessed Saviour, to prevent all these dangers and mischievous consequents, exhorts Christians to consider and remove all these occasions, especially before they enter upon the sacred acts and duties of religion; saying, in the next words, 'Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' Where the bringing the gift to the altar, relates to all the offerings and sacrifices under the law, which were required to be offered on the altar, either for the atonement of sin, or the commemoration of mercies received: such were the sin-offering, the peace-offering,

the freewill-offering, together with the daily and yearly sacrifices; all which, though required as duties, yet were called and accepted as gifts. Such, likewise, are the christian sacrifices and oblations required now under the gospel, as prayers, praises, fastings, thanksgivings, hearing the word, and especially receiving the holy sacrament; all which, when we offer up in the church, or at the holy table, we are said to 'bring our gift to the altar.'

And when we do so, and there call to mind 'that our brother hath ought against us;' that is, that we have been angry with him without a cause, or that we have abused or slandered him, or fixed any ill titles or characters upon him, or any way hurted him in body, goods, or name; what then? Why, 'leave there thy gift (saith our Saviour) before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift;' that is, betake thyself with all speed to the person thou hast thus injured, and use all means to obtain his pardon, by acknowledging thy fault, and making all possible reparation, that he may be friends with thee, and so be perfectly reconciled to each other. Till this be done, God will accept of no gift at thy hands; and when thou hast thus done, then 'come and offer thy gift:' not that thou art to leave the duty undone, or make this an excuse for thy not offering the gift at all; for that would be to excuse one fault with another, which would not extenuate, but enhance the guilt of both: but thou art rather to hasten the doing of the one, that thou mayest be the better fitted for the doing of the other: for he that is not yet reconciled, must not carry away his gift, but leave it before the altar, and go and be reconciled, and then come and offer his gift; then may he complete his intended sacrifice, and the oblation shall not only find acceptance, but come up with a sweet-smelling savour. So that the sense of this advice is, that before we enter upon any religious duty, we are to enter into ourselves, and see how we stand affected towards our neighbour; and if we find any thing amiss, we are to empty our souls of all grudges, prejudices, and surmises; and, in all our addresses unto God, to come with hearts filled with love, peace, and reconciliation with all men.

And this is to be done out of hand, without delay, which, as in most cases, so, more especially in this, is very dangerous; and therefore we should not defer a matter of so great weight and necessity, upon which all our acceptance with God depends, but set about it presently, before it be too late. So we are exhorted in the next words:—

'Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison: verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.' Where the guilty person in this kind is represented under the notion of a debtor, both to God and man; to God, by breaking his law,

to man, by invading his property. Now, debtors being still exposed to great dangers, all such offenders are here advised to agree and compose their matters with God and man, both whom they have made their adversaries; with God by repentance, with man by restitution. And because the deferring of these things will increase both the danger and the difficulty, they are here called upon to do it quickly, while they are in the way, and terms of accommodation and agreement may be had; lest, by delays, they be, before they are aware, brought before the great Judge of heaven and earth, and he deliver them over to the sergeant or officer; that is, to death or the devil, to be cast into the prison of hell; where their torment will be endless, easeless, and remediless, not being able to be released or come out thence, till they have paid to Divine justice the utmost farthing: which being never able to do, they must for ever suffer, because they can never satisfy. This will be the case of all that harbour any malice or hatred in their heart, and therefore let us not put off this great business of reconciling ourselves to God and man: now is the time allotted us for that purpose; the present time is all that we can call our own; and if we neglect that, we may have cause for ever to repent, but perhaps never have time to repair our folly. Be wise therefore in time, and agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest thou be shortly sent there, where, though thou canst not pay the least, yet the utmost farthing will be exacted from thee.

This is the whole of this day's gospel; which may teach us,—

1. To carry our righteousness above and beyond that of the Scribes and Pharisees: they were curious about the outside, and were fair and beautiful without, but within full of filth and rottenness. But let us endeavour to cleanse the heart, and see that matters be right within. They stuck to the letter of the law, without minding the true intent of it; but let us look more to the spiritual sense and meaning of it, and observe it in the full extent of it. They condemned gross sins, and connived at less; and if they abstained from the outward act, could allow themselves in the inward motions, occasions, and tendencies to it: but let us lay the axe to the very root, and cut down every branch of iniquity. They rested in the external acts of religion, as of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, without regarding the true ends or manner of performing them; but let us look more to our aims and intentions in these duties, that they may be rightly directed to the glory of God, and the good of our own and others' souls. In a word, the Pharisees were proud, partial, and hypocritical in their righteousness; and therefore let us exceed them in the humility, integrity, and sincerity of ours: for since heaven and happiness lie beyond the bounds and extent of their righteousness, we must inevitably perish and miscarry with them, if we go not farther than they.

2. Let our obedience to God's laws extend to the whole design

and intention of them: in the affirmative precepts, let it reach to all the means, motives, and incentives requisite to the observance of them; in the negative precepts, let it take in all the occasions, steps, and tendencies to the breach of them. Particularly in keeping the sixth commandment against killing, here mentioned, let us avoid all rash and causeless anger, all malice and hatred, that naturally lead to it; for malice is a frequent occasion and forerunner of murder, and St. John tells us, that 'he that hateth his brother is a murderer,' 1 John iii. 15; for hatred is attended with a desire of taking away the object of it, either by himself or another. Moreover, let us avoid all virulent and opprobrious speeches, such as calling our brother 'racha,' or fool, a vain, empty, witless, and wicked fellow; which commonly provoke to rage, and draw on murder. In short, 'let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from us, with all malice;' especially when we draw nigh to holy things: and 'be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us;' reconciling ourselves to our greatest foes. And let that be done quickly, lest it be too late; and so by living in peace and charity with God and man here, we shall live in eternal peace and joy with both hereafter; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ROM. vi. 19, to the end. — *I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness,* &c.

THE service for this day beseeches the Lord of all power and might, who is the author and giver of all good things, to graft in our hearts the love of his name, to increase in us true religion, to nourish us with all goodness, and of his great mercy to keep us in the same.

The epistle for the day is the latter part of the same chapter, from whence that for the last Sunday was taken; where the apostle having shewed his new-converted Romans the efficacy of Christ's death for the killing of sin, and the virtue of his resurrection for the quickening them to a life of righteousness, he exhorts them to conform to both, by dying to the one, and living to the other. To which end, he here, in the close of the chapter, accommodates himself to their weakness, and labours to convince them of the great danger of their former sinful courses, and likewise of the safety and happiness that is to be found in the ways of righteousness.

'I speak after the manner of men, (saith he,) because of the infirmity of your flesh;' meaning, that he condescended to express these weighty matters to them, in terms and similitudes suited to the weakness of their capacity and understanding; setting forth their duty to Christ by the known resemblance and relation of master and servant, and by the vulgar terms of liberty and bondage, to which they were much inured. Or else his complying with the infirmities of their flesh, may be meant of his laying on them the most easy and moderate burdens, requiring the least that in any reason could be required of them; and so it signifies his dealing with them in the mildest and most equitable manner, by reason of the weakness of their flesh, which could not yet well bear any greater rigour or higher expressions. That this is the most probable sense of those words, appears by what follows; where the apostle seems to tell them, that all he would at present require of them is, that 'as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity,' that is, have gone on from one degree of sin unto another; 'even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness,' or go on from one degree of virtue unto another. The sense whereof is, that they should be as diligent now in the service of Christ, as they had been formerly in the service of sin, and as careful to use their members to the purposes of holiness and virtue, as they had formerly been to yield them up to vile and brutish affections. This in all reason, he tells them, he must require of them, and would as yet ask no more, though in strictness of justice he might require them to be far more exercised and delighted in the service of God, than ever they were in the service of sin; forasmuch as the service of the one is highly honourable and advantageous, and the service of the other base and destructive; and he might with all reason exact more care and solicitude to secure to them heaven and happiness, than they used before to run headlong to hell and damnation. But the apostle here would have the diligence of his new converts in the ways of God to equal only their former industry in the ways of sin, till they were farther advanced, and then they would see reason enough that it should far exceed it.

And this he would have them the rather do, because, saith he, 'when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.' When you yielded up yourselves to the service of your lusts, righteousness or true religion had nothing of your service; what reason, then, is there that sin should have any of your service now, when you have wholly devoted yourselves to the service of God? If sin and Satan had all then, having changed your master, why should not God and Christ have all now? Sure the rules of justice will oblige you to abstain as strictly now from all evil, as ye did then from all good: considering farther, that there is no dividing your service between two masters; the master you have taken to must have all. If, then, when ye were the servants

of sin, righteousness had no power at all over you, now that you have put yourselves under the kingdom of righteousness, you must no longer serve sin, but utterly renounce all the power and tyranny of it; which, if you do but consider your own ease and interest, you will see infinite reason to do. For 'what fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.' What profit did you ever receive from your former sinful courses, which yielded you no better fruits than those of shame and death? Where the apostle urges a threefold argument, to deter men from the love and practice of all sin.

The First is taken from the unprofitableness of it: 'What fruit had ye in those things?'

The Second, from the shamefulness of it: 'Whereof ye are now ashamed.'

The Third, from the destructiveness, or the fatal end and issue of it: 'For the end of those things is death.' Of which something particularly. And,—

First, Of the unprofitableness of all sinful courses: 'What fruit had ye in those things?' The question supposes none at all, or else very bad fruit, which is worse than nothing.

It is natural for men to desire some fruit of their labours; and it is an uncomfortable reflection, to find at any time that we have laboured in vain. The voice of nature is, 'Who will shew us any good?' and all men are acted by the hopes of gain. Now the apostle here plainly intimates, that sinners reap no fruit from all the pains and labour they take in a wicked course, that their expectation is frustrated, and they toil day and night and catch nothing; for which reason sin is elsewhere styled 'the unfruitful works of darkness,' because they turn to no account, but deceive the hopes of all that follow them. Eph. v. 11. So that sinners may be truly said to serve the devil for nought, and to weary themselves for very vanity.

But there is a worse thing in this matter than this; for sin not only yields no good fruit, but brings forth a great deal of bad and bitter fruit. There is a meiosis in the words, and more is intended by it than seems to be expressed; for when the apostle asks, 'What fruit had ye then in those things?' it is as if he had said, What unspeakable mischief, what vast damage, what insufferable evils, have you found in these things! So that he hereby gives us to understand, that sin is not only an unprofitable, but a very mischievous thing; and instead of yielding any sweet or good fruit, brings forth nothing but wild grapes, such as set the teeth on edge at present, and end at last in weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. To clear this, consider,—

1st, What bad fruit these things bring to the body, of which we are all so fond and tender. Does sin conduce to the ease, health, or comfort of this beloved part? No, quite otherwise: it is so far from the benefit, that it is the very bane of the body;

for it impairs the health, decays the strength, and destroys all the comfort of it. What a numerous train of evils and diseases is a vicious life attended withal! and what apparent mischief does it bring upon all that follow it! How does excess and intemperance drown the spirits! And though it seems to raise them for the present, yet sinks them after into the deeper sadness. Does not envy pine and macerate the body? Do not malice and revenge often shorten men's lives, and make the bloody and deceitful man not to live out half his days? How do worldly cares and carking eat out the heart, and bring on one consumption to avoid another! Lewdness and debauchery antedate the miseries of the grave, and make men rotten before they are dead. So destructive is vice to human nature, that they who commit it 'sin (as the apostle tells us) against their own body.'

Neither doth the soul, that divine and nobler part of us, reap any better, but rather much worse fruit, from a sinful course of life; for it robs it of its peace, fills it with trouble and disquiet at present, and deprives it at last of all future happiness: 'There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked; but they are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' Isa. lvii. 20. Solomon tells us, that 'he that sinneth against God wrongeth his own soul.' Prov. viii. 36. And St. Peter, that 'fleshly lusts war against the soul.' 1 Pet. ii. 11. They deface the beauty, and sink the glory of the soul beneath the beast that perisheth; they take away its freedom, and make it a drudge and a vassal to the vilest lusts. In a word, they bereave our immortal souls of the vision and enjoyment of God, wherein consists their truest glory and felicity.

But because some men are more fond of their substance than of their souls, let us see what fruit a wicked life brings to their goods or estate; and here it is evident, what havoc sin makes of men's estates, how it shipwrecks the fortunes, and scatters the substance of the wealthiest persons. A loose and profligate life brings on poverty as one that travelleth, and want as an armed man, and entails misery and distress upon posterity; fraud and deceit bring a moth and a canker into ill-gotten goods, which eats out all the comfort of them, and leaves only the rust to testify against them; oppression and injustice entitle to a curse instead of a blessing, and the wrath of God enters the house of the thief and the robber. In a word, a wicked life, instead of mending, mars men's fortunes here, and at last deprives them of an everlasting inheritance.

But what fruit do men reap in their name and reputation by a sinful life? Why, that the

Next argument in the text will inform us, viz., the shamefulness of sin, in these words, 'Whereof ye are now ashamed.' Which give us to understand, that sin is attended with shame, and leads only to confusion of face. This not only sacred writ, but daily experience doth confirm to us. Holy Job tells us,

that they 'who hate the Lord shall be clothed with shame.' Job viii. 22. And the Psalmist, that 'they shall be covered with their own confusion, as with a cloak.' Psal. cix. 29. And the wise man, that 'shame is the portion and promotion of fools.' Prov. iii. 35. Who is there that doth not see the truth hereof verified by daily experience? Doth not sin sink the character, and blast the reputation even of the greatest persons? Yea, doth not the bare suspicion of vice reflect and stain the glory of the best abilities? Where was it ever known that men were commended for their wickedness? Who ever reckoned his vices among the titles of his honour, or sought to perpetuate his memory by the glory of his crimes? Do not these things clothe men with shame, and load them with dishonour? and that not only with a few knowing and judicious persons, but with all mankind, who mark sin with disgrace, and brand such as practise it with reproach and infamy. This is evident,—

1st, From the many arts that sinners use to hide and conceal their wickedness: 'He that doth evil, (saith our Saviour,) cometh not to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' John iii. 19, 20. And,—

2dly, From the many shifts and evasions men fly to, to lessen and excuse it: of which no other account can be given, but the shame that attends it; for else they would not be so backward to own, nor so forward to conceal it. Indeed, sin and shame came into the world at once, and have ever since gone hand in hand together. Our first parents had no sooner sinned, but they presently hid themselves, and their posterity have been gathering fig-leaves to hide their nakedness ever since.

Now, this shame proceeds partly from the natural turpitude and deformity of sin, which hath that baseness and ugliness in it, that renders it odious and loathsome in the sight of God and man; and therefore cannot but create shame and blushing in those that practise it.

And, partly, from the power of natural conscience, which, as God's deputy, marks and reprehends the sinner when he doth amiss; bringing trouble to the mind, and shame upon the countenance: for where there is a consciousness of guilt within, there will be blushing and confusion without. And,—

Partly, likewise, from the just judgment of God, who inflicts this as a punishment of vice, and makes shame the companion of folly. So we find him threatening the Jews, 'I will bring an everlasting reproach upon them, and a perpetual shame, that shall not be forgotten.' Jer. xxiii. 40. And elsewhere, 'They shall be greatly ashamed, and covered with everlasting confusion.' Jer. xx. 11. Indeed, it is but just with God to fix a brand of infamy upon the brow that is bent against him; and to cover that face with confusion that sets itself against heaven: 'It is a righteous thing (saith the apostle) to render tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil.'

Thus we see how justly the apostle upbraided these Romans, and in them all sorts of sinners, with the unfruitfulness and shamefulness of their former evil courses; saying, 'What fruit had you then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?'

But he minds them of a worse thing yet than all this, and that is the fatal end and issue of all sin and wickedness; 'for the end of all these things is death.' The wisdom of a man is best seen in propounding to himself a good end, and pursuing it by right and proper means. Now, though all men desire good, and propound happiness for their end, yet too many mistake the way that leads to it: to seek for it in the ways of sin, is to seek the living among the dead; for sin is the cause and occasion of all our misery, and to hope for happiness that way, is to seek life and salvation in the paths that lead to death and destruction; for the end of those things is death.

Now, the death here mentioned as the end of these things, is both temporal and eternal death; the former is the separation of the soul from the body for awhile, the latter is the separation of body and soul from Christ for evermore.

For the first, that temporal death is the effect and punishment of sin, is evident from the sentence pronounced upon the first transgression; 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' It was our first parents' disobedience that brought mortality and death upon all their offspring, who have ever since felt the stroke of it. So the apostle testifies, 'As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, even so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' Rom. v. 12.

But the death here chiefly intended by the apostle is eternal death, which is the everlasting destruction both of body and soul; called in Scripture the second death, because it follows the former, and knows no ease or end. This is the sorest and worst of evils that can befall us: for, whereas all other miseries find some remedy or relief, and have their period in the grave; this goes farther, and hath all the doors of hope shut against it: it leaves men to groan under endless, easeless, and remediless torments. And yet this is the portion of all wilful and impenitent sinners, and will be the bitter end and wages of unrighteousness.

But how doth sin thus bring forth death, or lead to this wretched and fatal end? Why, it hath both a natural tendency, as an efficient cause, to produce it; and a moral tendency, as a meritorious cause, to deserve it.

1. I say, sin hath a natural tendency, as an efficient cause, to produce death: for it destroys the health, strength, and vigour of the body, and so brings on temporal death; and likewise destroys the power, peace, and tranquillity of the soul, and so leads to spiritual and eternal death. Intemperance as naturally overwhelms the spirits, as water drowns what is cast into it; and the flames of lust as necessarily waste and consume, as the fire burns any combustible matter: so that death is the necessary consequent of

sin, and proceeds from it as naturally as an effect does from its cause.

2. Sin hath a moral tendency as a meritorious cause to deserve death; for there is a guilt in sin that obliges to punishment, and death is said to be the wages of sin, which justice therefore requires to be paid: and this, we may be assured, will be done either in this world, or in that which is to come.

This is the bad fruit, and the bad end of all vicious courses, which are attended with mischief and shame here, and endless misery and torment hereafter; of which the apostle here minds the converted Romans.

'But now (saith he) being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life;' that is, you being delivered from the slavery ye were in unto sin, and brought over to the service of God, you have other and better fruit than you had before; fruit that will improve you in grace and holiness now, and, ere long, bring you to endless glory and happiness; for as 'death is the wages of sin,' being as due to it as wages to work, and hire to the labourer; so 'the gift of God is eternal life:' which God, of his infinite grace and goodness, hath made the portion of the righteous, and assigned as the reward of a holy and virtuous life; and that 'through Jesus Christ, our Lord;' that is, by the merits of his death, and the virtue of his satisfaction.

This is the scope of this day's epistle; from which we may infer a few things. As,—

1st, From St. Paul's speaking to these Romans after the manner of men, because of the infirmities of the flesh, we may learn to condescend to the capacities of our hearers, and to accommodate our speeches to the weakness of their understandings: otherwise we do but beat the air, and prove barbarians to one another.

2dly, The apostle's advising them to make those members the servants of righteousness, which they had before used as the instruments of sin, teaches us to bestow, at least, the same pains in the service of God, that sinners do in the drudgeries of their lusts; and then we shall soon find the comfort more, and the reward greater. Did men go as cheerfully and heartily to church, as they do to a market, and take as much care to provide for their souls as they do for their bodies; did they mind the next world as frequently as they do this, and be as solicitous to obtain heaven hereafter, as they are to gain and secure a little spot of earth here; they would find their labour turn to a far better account, and their pains recompensed with a higher and nobler reward.

3dly, From the unfruitfulness, shamefulness, and destructiveness of all sinful courses, let us learn to abhor and abandon them. Who, but a madman, would labour for nothing, and weary himself for what is worse than nothing? And yet so do all they that have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness: we have seen what bitter fruit the soul, body, and estate reap from these

things; so that to continue in them is but to court misery, and be fond of our own destruction.

Again, Who is there but shuns disgrace, and flies from shame and confusion of face? And yet the wise man tells us, this is the promotion of fools: and therefore if interest will not, let the shame of the world prevail with us to leave all vile and vicious courses; but if neither of these can, let the fatal end and issue of sin dissuade us from it: we see the end of it is death; and who, that considers what he doth, would follow that which leads to so miserable an end?

In a word, then, let us 'die unto sin,' that we may 'escape eternal death;' and let us 'live unto righteousness,' that 'having our fruit unto holiness, our end may be everlasting life.' Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MARK viii. 1—10.—*In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far*, &c.

THIS miracle of the loaves is ordered by the Church to be read three times in the year, in the gospels for three several Sundays: the first on the fourth Sunday in Lent, of which before; the second on this seventh Sunday after Trinity, of which now; the third on the last Sunday after Trinity, of which hereafter. And this, perhaps, was appointed, partly for the greatness, and partly for the commodiousness of the miracle; it being fit to instruct, and apt to take with the multitude, who are sooner won and wrought upon by arguments taken from the present profits and provisions of this life, than from future, though more heavenly food.

There is, indeed, some circumstantial difference between the three evangelists in the relating of it. As,—

(1.) In the circumstance of time when it was done: St. Matthew relates it as done just after the news of the beheading of John the Baptist. Matt. xiv. St. Mark here, immediately after a miracle wrought upon a deaf and dumb man; St. John about the time of the Passover. John vi. 4.

(2.) For the number of persons that did eat: St. Mark here mentions about four thousand; St. John about five thousand; St. Matthew about 'five thousand men, beside women and children.' Matt. xiv. 21. Again,—

(3.) For the number of the loaves and provisions: St. Mark here relates 'seven loaves, and a few small fishes;' St. Matthew and St. John but 'five loaves, and two small fishes.' Then,—

Lastly, For the fragments that were left and taken up: St. Mark here mentions but 'seven baskets' that were filled with them; St. Matthew and St. John 'twelve baskets full.' But these differences are only in a few small circumstances, and may easily happen among relaters and transcribers; though some, and, perhaps, probably enough, suppose this miracle to be done more than once; and if it were repeated, these little differences may be easily reconciled. But, however that be,—

The substance of the relation is the same in all the evangelists, who all agree that the operation was miraculous, it being infinitely above the power of any natural agent to feed four, as well as five thousand, with those small provisions; and it was equally impossible, in any natural way, to fill seven as well as twelve baskets with the poor remainders.

But to come to the gospel; it begins the relation of this miracle thus, 'In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples, and saith unto them, I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat,' &c. Where, in the account of this matter, we may observe,—

First, The number of the persons that were here in want and distress; and they were 'a multitude,' and 'a very great multitude:' this was a circumstance that moved our Saviour's bowels, and ought, indeed, to open and enlarge ours. The great numbers of the indigent and needy, that are made so by the casualties of fire, or other unavoidable accidents, are to open our hearts and hands to their relief: of this sort were the multitude here fed by our Saviour; they were not the idle and the lazy, that would not labour to feed themselves, but such as had been for some time in a desert place, where no provisions could be had, and so could get nothing to eat: and what the desert was to them then, that decrepit old age, long sickness, multitude of children, want of work, and such like helpless calamities, are to others now; they are disabled from sustaining themselves, and so are cast upon the bounty of the rich: and where the number of these is great, there our care and charity must be the greater: not that we are to give to every one that asketh, no nor yet to every one that needeth; for that would exhaust our substance, and reduce us to want ourselves. Christ, indeed, was able to feed thousands by miracle; his power was equal to his will, and both were infinite and without bounds; his mercy is over all his works, and is able to supply all their wants: but we are finite and limited both in our being and substance; our goodness extendeth not to all, and therefore we are to give only out of the ability and abundance that God hath given: but where the objects are more numerous, there the hand is to be the more bounteous, knowing, that 'he that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.' Again,—

Secondly, We may observe here the extremity of want and

necessity that this multitude were in; 'They have nothing to eat,' (saith the text,) and 'they have been with me three days,' (saith our Saviour,) without any sustenance or provision: so that they were ready to starve and pine away for hunger. The multitudes here fed by him were in a place remote from all accommodation; and having been there for some days without food, were driven to the utmost necessity, just upon the point of fainting and languishing. Now, in this sad and deplorable case, it is said,—

Thirdly, That Jesus called his disciples to him, and said, 'I have compassion on the multitude, because they have been with me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.' Times of misery are the seasons of pity: this moved our Saviour's compassion towards them, and his bowels turned within him, and so should ours in the like case. The multitude had attended him as long as they were able, and now could go no farther without fainting, nor subsist any longer without sustenance. God suffers his own people sometimes to be in straits, and to labour under great difficulties and necessities; but then 'as a father pitieth his child,' whom he loveth, 'so doth the Lord pity them that fear him.' 'In the mount of the Lord it will be seen,' was a proverbial saying among the Jews, to signify that God will help his people out of the greatest straits, and appear for them in the height of their extremities. So he did for the Israelites in the wilderness, giving them food from heaven, when earthly provisions failed them; when they were hungry and thirsty, and their souls ready to faint within them, he supported them by miracles, and fed them with extraordinary and celestial provisions. So did Christ here for the multitude that followed him; he nourished them in a desert, where little or nothing could be had, by an extraordinary providence; and by his multiplying virtue furnished a meal for vast numbers out of a small pittance: their necessity was his opportunity, and his compassion was highest when their condition was lowest, and thereby teaches us to shew bowels of pity and compassion upon those that are in the greatest want. Our blessed Saviour commended the good Samaritan for pitying and providing for the wounded traveller, when he could find no relief from the hardhearted priest and Levite in his greatest distress; whereas he, good man, commiserated his condition, brought him to an inn, poured in wine and oil into his wounds, and at his own expense took the care of him. This Christ commended as an act worthy of imitation, and bid his disciples go, and 'learn to do likewise.' Luke x. 33—37. 'He that hath this world's goods, (saith St. John,) and seeth his brother lack and perish with hunger, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' And, indeed, they that suffer any to starve for lack of necessaries, will be charged with the death of those whom they might and ought to have relieved.

Fourthly, We may observe farther, that the persons here

relieved, or fed by Christ, were those that attended his person, and followed him both to hear his doctrine and behold his miracles. 'I have compassion (saith he) on the multitude, because they have been with me,' moving from place to place with me, to see my works, and to receive mine instructions; and for the space of three days have had no manner of sustenance, and I cannot see them lack necessaries, who have dearly loved and stuck to me in all my travels. He will not suffer them to want corporeal food, who come to him for spiritual; neither will he deny them the temporal food of their bodies, who labour for the immortal food of their souls. And this may teach us to prefer in our charity those that attend the service of God, and adhere to the ways and duties of religion; and to relieve the honest, virtuous and pious poor, before the wicked, careless, and wandering beggars: the best charity to these is correction, and forcing them to work; for Solomon hath ordered a scourge for the sluggard, and a rod for the fool's back. Prov. xxvi. 3. And our laws have appointed the same for all lazy and sturdy beggars, who will not labour in any calling to get an honest livelihood, but idly live upon the labours of others, without taking any care either to serve God or themselves. The apostle wills us, in 'doing good,' to have an 'especial regard to them that are of the household of faith.' Gal. vi. 10. We cannot, indeed, relieve all; our stock or substance will not reach to that; neither are we to impoverish ourselves to feed others, nor to be so profuse in our charity as to render ourselves the objects of it; for charity may and ought to begin at home, though it must not end there: we are, in the first place, to mind and provide for our own subsistence, and then to give to others what we can spare from our own necessities and abundance.

And here, too, our charity must be guided by the rules of prudence and discretion; that is, so to distribute to the exigencies of others, as not to rob or wholly to deprive ourselves; nor yet to be so liberal in our distribution to one or more, as to have nothing left for the succour of others. But above all, we are to have our first and principal regard to the honest and laborious poor, who by age, sickness, want of work, or any unavoidable casualties, are reduced to poverty; and to relieve them before and above others, who are poor because they will not endeavour to be otherwise, and instead of working with their hands the thing that is good, reach out their hands to picking and stealing, and to do all manner of evil. Moreover, we are taught here only to relieve men's present wants, and not to provide against all future contingencies, which men's own care and providence ought prudently to foresee and prevent. These lessons we learn from the persons to whom this miracle did extend.

But what was the disciples' answer to our Saviour's compassionate care and concern for the relief of this numerous and necessitous multitude? Why, 'the disciples answered him,

From whence can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?' An answer much like that of the murmuring and distrustful Israelites: 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? He smote the stony rock, indeed, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams flowed withal; but can he give bread also, and provide flesh for his people?' Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20. 'They forget what God hath done, (saith the Psalmist,) and the wonderful works that he had shewed for them;' viz., the marvellous things he did in the sight of our forefathers in the land of Egypt; how he divided the sea, and let them go through, and made the waters to stand on a heap, which fell down and overwhelmed their enemies; how he led them with a cloud by day, and in the night with a light of fire, &c.; things great enough to be had in everlasting remembrance, and to banish all doubts of his power, and willingness to provide for them. And yet they kept not his goodness in remembrance, but were disobedient at the sea, even at the Red Sea, where such great things had been done for them, as we read at large in that seventy-eighth psalm. The like stupidity seemed here to possess the minds of the disciples, who had let slip the memory of Christ's mighty works, and forgat the operations of his hand; else, instead of asking how they should be satisfied with bread here in the wilderness, they would say with David, 'Thou shalt prepare a table for me in the sight of mine enemies; thou shalt anoint my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.' Psalm xxiii. But what reply did our Saviour make to these distrustful words? Why, Christ takes no notice of their diffidence, knowing it to proceed from the weakness of their faith, and the infirmity of their mind, but applies himself to another method for their conviction, asking them, 'How many loaves have ye?' intending to add such a multiplying virtue and blessing to them, as should fill them with astonishment, and make them lay aside all doubts and fears about future provisions. The answer they gave as to the number of the loaves was 'seven;' in St. Matthew it is but 'five barley loaves, and two small fishes;' slender viands for so great a multitude, especially having come so long a journey, and being in so hungry and fainting a condition.

However, 'our Saviour commanded the people to sit down on the ground;' which being a green grassy place, as St. John tells us, gave them the convenience of sitting or leaning upon one another, the posture used in those days in eating. And when they were thus placed, 'he took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set them before the people.' Where his giving of thanks before his distributing the creatures to them, signifies his rendering acknowledgments to God for his bounty, and making outward and solemn expressions of it, before we use or receive his creatures for our refreshment; whose excellent example herein may teach us to do the same, to render unto God the praise of his gifts, and to 'lift up our eyes unto him,' who openeth his hand,

and 'filleth all things living with plenteousness;' setting out to every one their portion, and 'giving them their meat in due season.' This is a tribute of homage we owe to the Almighty Donor for all his blessings, and is a piece of service highly profitable for us, and acceptable to him.

It follows, 'And they had a few small fishes; and he blessed, and he commanded them to set them also before them:' where his blessing the few fishes, denotes not only his acknowledgments to God for his liberality, but his sanctifying them to us for our support and comfort; for all the creatures are sanctified by the commanding word of God, and his blessing is derived upon them by prayer and thanksgiving.

But what comfort did the multitude reap from those small provisions? Why, that the next words tell us: 'So they did all eat, and were filled.' Wonderful! that so small a quantity of provisions should increase and multiply to the filling of so vast a multitude; for the next verse tells us, that they were about four thousand; and St. Matthew, that they were about five thousand, beside women and children. And what is more strange than all this, it is here said that they took up of the broken meat, that was left, seven baskets; or, as St. Matthew hath it, twelve baskets full; which was vastly more than was at first before them; after which 'they were all sent away' fully satisfied.

But though this miracle be prodigiously great and astonishing, yet there is something far more wonderful and amazing, that occurs every day to a wise observer; and that is, the feeding and filling not of thousands only, but of millions of creatures, with daily and hourly provisions by natural and ordinary means; which, being common and constant, are not so much admired as some rare and uncommon occurrences, which in themselves are far less wonderful. However, both are matters of our loudest praises and thanksgivings; and 'whoso is wise will ponder these things,' and 'he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.'

Thus we see the miracle held forth in the gospel for this day; the improvement and application whereof being made at large in the gospels for the fourth Sunday in Lent, and the last Sunday after Trinity, I shall not need to repeat it here, but refer the reader to them.

DISCOURSE CCXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

ROM. viii. 12—18.—*Brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live: for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God,* &c.

THE collect for this day beseeches God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth, to

put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us.

Now, the things hurtful to us are chiefly the works of the flesh, which lead to death and damnation; and the things profitable for us are the fruits of the Spirit, which lead to life and salvation. Accordingly, the epistle for the day treats of both these, exhorting us to put away the one, and to put on the other. It begins with the kind compellation of brethren: 'Brethren, (saith he,) we are debtors,' &c. Where the apostle takes these new-converted Romans into the relation of a spiritual fraternity, styling them brethren, hoping by that loving and endearing title the better to instil his advice and precepts into them. To which end, he first puts them in mind of the great debt that lies upon all Christians, by virtue of that holy profession they have taken upon them: 'Brethren, we are debtors;' that is, we have many obligations lying upon us by our receiving the gospel, and embracing Christianity; being bound, by the condition of our spiritual being, to lead another course of life than we did before. And this debt is contracted, not barely by our christian profession, which obliges us to all purity and holiness, but likewise by the covenant and promise we thereby enter into; as also by the many benefits and privileges that we are entitled to, and receive by it; all which are strong engagements to leave our former sinful courses, and to live in newness of life, now we have embraced the christian faith.

But the apostle proceeds, in the next words, to declare more particularly the debt that lies upon us on these accounts; which he expresses first negatively, 'We are debtors, (saith he,) not to the flesh, to live after the flesh;' that is, though our fleshly part hath many natural appetites and desires, that call upon us to be gratified; and we are so far indebted to nature, as to be obliged to answer and satisfy the regular demands of it; yet we are not bound to hearken to the irregular motions of corrupt nature, or to follow the sway of our sinful lusts; yea, we are obliged to the contrary, to mortify our earthly members by fasting and prayer, and to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. To which the apostle adds a strong reason or inducement: 'For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;' if ye give up yourselves to the command of a carnal and sensual appetite, and suffer yourselves to be carried away by the temptations of your fleshly lusts, ye will inevitably expose yourselves to the destruction of body and soul; death will be the certain end and issue of such unmortified lusts; for 'to be carnally-minded is death,' ver. 6. And that not a temporal death only, or a short separation of body and soul, but eternal death, which is a separation of both from God for ever. For 'the carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be;' and what carries such a direct enmity and opposition against God, can never be so reconciled as ever to enjoy him. So that

we cannot be debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh, which is attended with such a fatal destruction.

But how, then, are we said to be debtors? Why, it is 'to the Spirit, to live after the Spirit,' who hath regenerated and begotten us again to a new life; it is to him we owe our reception into Christ's church, and being called thereby into a state of salvation. This hath laid upon us a debt of thankfulness and obedience, which we are to be always paying; and that is to be done by living after the Spirit, by observing and obeying its godly motions, and by governing ourselves and actions by the gifts and graces of it; for as 'to live after the flesh' is to follow the corrupt inclinations of the flesh, and to obey it in the lusts thereof; so 'to live after the Spirit' is to follow the conduct of God's Holy Spirit, and to observe the dictates and directions of that Divine guide. As for the former, we have no obligation, but to renounce and forsake all the works of the flesh, which are hurtful to all that indulge themselves in them; for the latter, we are indebted to labour for, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are highly useful and profitable for us. And to this our christian profession, and the hopes we have from it, strongly oblige us; for it is but reasonable that we should act and live up to what we pretend to; and, being entered upon a new and better covenant, that is established upon better promises than we had before, we should answer it by a suitable conversation. Hence St. Peter, mentioning the exceeding great dignity and advantages of our christian profession, styling Christians 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,' wills them not to do any thing unworthy of themselves, that might debase the honour, or deprive them of the benefit of their high and holy calling. And, because nothing could more endanger both than living after the flesh, he 'beseeches them, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' 1 Pet. ii. 9—11. And to this St. Paul here gives us abundant encouragement; for though he before told us, that if we live after the flesh, we shall die, yet he adds, that 'if we through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.' And though to be carnally-minded is death, yet 'to be spiritually-minded is life and peace:' where, as eternal death is the wages and consequent of a sinful and sensual course of life; so eternal life will be the end and reward of a spiritual and heavenly conversation. The proof whereof the apostle gives us in the following words:—

'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God;' meaning, that being led by the Spirit of God, and living by the dictates and directions of it, we become the sons and children of God, and consequently he will deal with us as his children, and bestow upon us the inheritance of eternal life. And this sonship we have not barely by right of creation; for, in that respect, all, even the worst of men, are said to be the sons of

God; but by a new title of regeneration and adoption, whereby, from aliens and outcasts, we are taken into Christ's family, and entitled to all the privileges of the sons of God. This he farther confirms in the next words, saying, 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father; meaning, that we are not now in the condition of servants or slaves, who are called upon to do their work, and, instead of wages, are in continual fear of the lash; neither are we now, as the Jews sometimes were, in bondage to the beggarly elements of the world, or the childish rudiments of Moses's law, which was a state of servility and thraldom: but now our condition in Christ is mightily altered; we have another Spirit, that carries us above all such servile and slavish fears, and gives us the boldness and confidence of children, even the Spirit of adoption, which enables us to go freely to him, and cry, 'Abba, Father:' a form of speech whereby children were wont to address their parents, signifying that we are allowed to come to God, not as servants to a hard master, but as sons to a tender and loving Father, expecting all fatherly usage from him, even assistance to perform his commands, and assurance to receive the reward of them.

But how are we confirmed in the belief and certainty of our sonship? Why, that the next words declare, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God;' meaning, that we have the testimony of God's Holy Spirit, concurring with our own spirits, to confirm us in the truth of our filial relation to him. Our own spirit of itself is fallible, and might be apt to flatter and deceive us in this matter; but the testimony of God's Holy Spirit is infallible, and cannot deceive us: the heart of man is deceitful, saith the prophet, and not to be trusted alone; but the Spirit of God is a Spirit of truth, that leads into all and nothing but truth: and having the concurrent testimony of both these for the truth of our sonship, we may safely rely upon it, that we are the children of God. And this evidence we have by the Spirit's bearing witness with our spirits, testifying to our consciences that we are more than servants, (the highest privilege that the Jews could boast of,) even the sons of God. And yet this is not all; for

'If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.' It is, we know, the custom of all places and countries, that children should be heirs to their father; in like manner therefore God being our father, we thereby become 'heirs of God;' and being our heavenly Father, we are thereby entitled as heirs to the kingdom of heaven: to which we are 'joint-heirs with Christ;' he, indeed, as a son, by natural generation, and so the first-born, and, in that sense, the only-begotten Son of God, and so sole heir by nature; we, as sons, by adoption and grace, and, by virtue of that, having a share in the inheritance, and so are co-heirs with Christ. In earthly kingdoms the inheri-

tance goes only to the elder brother, but God makes all his children heirs, and joint-partakers of his heavenly kingdom. But how come we, who had forfeited both our sonship and right to the inheritance by the first transgression and rebellion against our heavenly Father, to be thus restored by adoption, and reinstated again into the privileges of sons? Why, this was done for us by the merits and mediation of Christ: for so saith the apostle, 'If a son, then an heir through Christ.' Gal. iv. 7. And though no elder brother is wont to divide the inheritance with the younger, and make him co-heir with himself; yet Christ, our elder brother, hath taken us into co-partnership with him; and, by his sufferings, purchased and procured redemption for us, and, by that means, hath made us 'heirs of salvation,' and entailed this inheritance upon us. Heb. i. 4. 1 Pet. i. 4. So that we need not be dismayed at any sufferings that may befall us for his sake: for 'If so be that we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together.' Christ himself was made perfect by sufferings, and is thereby become our powerful and all-sufficient Saviour; he went to heaven by the cross, and we must go the same way to obtain the crown. The happiness that he procured for us by his sufferings, we are to be prepared for, and possess by our own: 'For God hath predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he may be the first-born among many brethren,' ver. 29; that is, we must first suffer with Christ, and then we shall reign with him.

Thus we see the sense of all the material passages of this day's epistle; from whence we are instructed in the following lessons:

1. From our not being debtors to the flesh, we are taught to abandon all the sinful lusts and desires of it, and that too upon pain of death and damnation; for if we live after the flesh, we shall die. Indeed, to satisfy the ordinary and natural appetites and cravings of the flesh, is necessary to preserve our bodily life; but to gratify the unlawful and irregular motions of it, will bring upon us death temporal and eternal: and therefore if we are at any time called upon and solicited to any evil by the importunity of our lusts, let us not hearken or yield to any such suggestions of our corrupt nature, but rather let us turn the deaf ear, and bid adieu to them. 'Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, and all inordinate affection;' and learn to 'possess your vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, as the Gentiles that know not God,' but in all purity and holiness, as becometh Christians. Col. iii. 5. 1 Thess. iv. 4, 5.

2. Being debtors to live after the Spirit, let us labour to discharge that obligation, by giving up ourselves to the guidance and conduct of God's Holy Spirit, following the direction of its light, and the influence of his grace in all our ways. This is to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,' and to 'walk as becometh the gospel of Christ:' which will stand the

trial of the last day, and secure to us the reward of eternal life; 'for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'

3. From the great privilege of sonship granted to all such, we may learn to behave ourselves as the sons or children of God. The duty of children, we know, is to love their parents with a hearty and entire affection: this we are to render in the highest and most superlative degree to our Father in heaven, 'loving him with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our strength,' and expressing it upon all occasions. Again, children owe honour and reverence to their parents: 'a son honoureth his father,' saith God; and 'we have had fathers in the flesh, and gave them reverence,' saith the apostle. This likewise is in the highest measure due to our heavenly Father, which we are therefore daily to pay him in all our words and works: 'If I then be a Father, where is mine honour? If a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts,' Mal. i. 6; both which he justly expects and challenges from us.

Moreover, children owe obedience to their parents; 'Children, obey your parents, (saith the apostle,) as it is fit in the Lord.' And this obedience is to be shewed by observing their commands, hearkening to their counsel, and kindly receiving their admonitions and corrections; knowing that they proceed from love, and aim only at their welfare.

Now this obedience is most eminently due to our Maker and Father in heaven: 'Hath not the potter power over the clay (saith the apostle) which he made and formed?' And hath not God much more the power over his creatures, the works of his own hands? who are therefore infinitely obliged to serve and obey him, especially considering that his commandments are never grievous, and his corrections are always for our good.

Once more, children owe a trust and confidence in their parents, and a dependence upon their care and provision for them: and this we are called upon to do in a more especial manner as to our heavenly Father; for we are bid to cast all our care upon him, who careth for us, and to rely upon his Providence at all times without anxiety and distrust. This lesson our Saviour teaches us at large in his Sermon on the Mount, Matt. vi.; where he useth many arguments to take us off from all solicitous care of food and raiment, with a promise, that if we seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, all the necessaries of life shall be added to us.

4. From God's making all his sons heirs, we learn the exceeding great honour and dignity that Christianity brings its followers to; it makes them heirs at present, and will shortly enter them into the possession of a kingdom, and that not an earthly fading kingdom, that soon vanishes away, but a kingdom in heaven, that can never be moved, or taken from them. 'Now are we the sons of God, (saith the apostle,) but it doth not yet appear what we

shall be; this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.'

Lastly, Since Christ obtained his kingdom for us by his sufferings, let us 'not be ashamed of the cross of Christ,' but, with St. Paul, rather 'glory' in, than groan under it; and then we may, with him, 'reckon the sufferings of this present life not worthy to be named or compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.' In short, we see the duty of our christian profession, which is to abstain from all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and to follow the fruits and dictates of God's Holy Spirit; and likewise the dignity of our high calling, to be the sons and heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ of his heavenly kingdom. To which God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW vii. 15—22.—*Beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's-clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree evil fruit*, &c.

THIS gospel for the day is another part or portion of our blessed Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he cautions his disciples and followers against false prophets and teachers; letting them know the manner and ends of their coming, and giving them some marks of distinction to discover and discern them by.

The collect for the day prays to be preserved from 'all hurtful things:' to which end,—

The epistle directs against all fleshly lusts, which are 'hurtful to the body:'—

The gospel against false prophets and teachers, which are 'hurtful to the soul.'

The caution against these is in these words; 'Beware of false prophets.' Where we are to inquire,—

First, Who are here meant by 'false prophets.' And,—

Secondly, What is implied in bidding us to 'beware' of them. For the

First, The false prophets, against whom this caution is given, were 'false Christs, false apostles,' and 'false teachers:' of all which we read in the apostles' days, and some of which we have the sad experience of in ours.

The 'false Christs were those that pretended to be that great prophet, which was to come into the world, to teach and to save mankind; and so assumed to themselves the dignity and the office of the Messias. Of these our Saviour himself foretold, Matt. xxiv. 5; 'Many (saith he) shall come in my name, saying,

I am Christ, and shall deceive many.' These he after styles 'false Christs and false prophets,' ver. 24. Of this sort were Theudas, Judas of Galilee, Barchocebas, and others, in the beginning of Christianity; such likewise was Eldavid in the sixth century, who gave out that he was Christ, and drew many after him; and such were David George, Hacket, and Naylor, in later days.

The 'false apostles' were those who pretended to be sent by Christ, and boasted of miracles to confirm their mission. Of this sort were Barjesus, Elymas the sorcerer, and Simon Magus, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles; these gave out themselves to be some great persons, and bewitched many with their sorceries. Acts viii. 9, 10. St. Paul styles them 'false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ; and no wonder, (saith he,) for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.' 2 Cor. xi. 13.

The 'false teachers' were those that owned the doctrine of Christ, but corrupted it by errors, and undermined it by divisions; building hay and stubble upon the foundation of Christianity, and blending the truth with many impure and corrupt mixtures. Such were the Gnostics of old, who pretended to greater knowledge than others; and such are the sectaries and separatists of our days, who, by boasting of new lights and inspirations, seduce and beguile the hearts of the simple. These are the false prophets and teachers, against whom this caution is given.

But, Secondly, What is implied in Christ's bidding his followers to beware of them? Why, that he himself hath in some measure told us, saying, Matt. xxiv., 'Believe them not, and go not after them;' that is, be not too forward to receive their doctrine, nor too easy to be misled by their example.

Our Saviour had been before speaking of that different dialect, that would be found among Christians in the latter days: 'One saying, Lo! here is Christ; and another, Lo! there:' to which he subjoins this advice, 'Believe them not: for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' And St. John gives the same advice: 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, for many false prophets are gone abroad into the world.' Error is sometimes so set off by artificial colours, that it is not easy for weak people to see through the disguise, or to discern the face of truth: some mistake through ignorance, and others by design, speaking things that they should not, for filthy lucre's sake. False teachers commonly work upon the credulity of the vulgar, and blindly lead them into many errors; and therefore be not too easy of belief, nor tamely yield up your faith to them.

Again, 'If any say,' concerning Christ, 'Behold, he is in the desert! go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers! believe it not.' In like manner, if any say, Behold, he is in

the conclave of catholics, or in the conventicles of sectaries, 'believe them not, and go not after them.' Be not drawn aside from the ways of truth and peace by such calls or examples. St. Paul bids us to 'mark those that cause divisions,' not to follow, but 'avoid them.' And from such as have only a form of godliness, without the power of it, he warns all good Christians to 'turn away;' saying, as Jacob did of Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity, 'My soul, come not thou into their secrets, to their assemblies mine honour be not thou united.' In a word, it is much more safe for the common people to give themselves up to the guidance and instructions of their lawful and authorized pastors, than to 'heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;' who are apt to 'draw them from the truth, and to turn them unto fables.' This is implied in the caution here given, 'Beware of false prophets.'

Now, to help us herein, our Saviour acquaints us, in the next words, with the manner and the end of their coming. The manner, in these words, 'They come to you outwardly in sheep's clothing;' that is, with soft and smooth pretences: the end, in these, 'but inwardly they are ravening wolves,' who come not but to despoil and to devour. A word or two of each: and,—

1st, Of the manner of their coming: 'They come to you in sheep's clothing.' These words are an allusion to the habit and custom used by the prophets of old, who, in the delivery of any weighty message, were wont to wear sheep's skins, as a badge of their meekness and innocence; in imitation whereof, the false prophets would put on their sheep's clothing on the like occasions, to gain the greater reverence to their persons, and the better reception to their doctrines. The sheep, you know, is a creature noted for its usefulness and innocence; it often receives, but never does any harm, and is therefore fitly made the emblem of meekness and patience. So that by sheep's clothing here we are to understand in general, all those artificial methods and disguises, by which deceivers seduce the unwary multitude: St. Paul expresses them by 'good words and fair speeches,' Rom. xvi.; and elsewhere by 'the sleight of men, and the cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' Eph. iv. 14. But more particularly, this sheep's clothing consists in a great show of piety and zeal for the glory of God, of great love and affection to the souls of men, and of great mortification and self-denial in themselves. I say,—

1. It consists in a great show of piety and zeal for the glory of God. This piece of sheep's clothing was visible in the Pharisees, who affected a mighty appearance of sanctity and devotion, and with it covered many vile enormities: 'They made long prayers,' sometimes in the 'corners of the streets,' and sometimes in private houses, merely to be heard and 'seen of men;' they kept the Sabbath with a more than ordinary strictness, and blamed our Saviour and his disciples for not coming up to their

preciseness. Wherein they are exactly imitated by the modern zealots and followers of that separating sect, who pretend to greater purity, and cry up a more spiritual way of worship, merely to hide the impurity of their lives, and the impiety of their divisions.

2. Another piece of this sheep's clothing is a pretence of great love to men's souls, and a more than ordinary care and tenderness for them. This St. Paul observed of the false teachers crept into the churches of Galatia, of whom he minds the Galatians: 'They zealously affect you, (saith he,) but not well;' meaning, that whatever show of love and kindness they make to you, there was nothing under it but falsehood and hypocrisy; and in all they say or do, their love was not to you, but themselves. For 'they would exclude you, (saith he,) that you might affect them;' that is, they would shut you out of the true faith, that you might admire their persons, and embrace their errors. The same cloak is put on and worn still by seducers, who pretend the greatest kindness when they intend the greatest mischief, and cover the foulest designs under the fairest show of affection.

3. Another piece of this sheep's clothing is a pretence to greater mortification and self-denial than other men. So St. Jerome interprets the sheep's clothing of false prophets, by their seeming rigour and austerity of life. Indeed, all that will draw disciples after them must pretend to something extraordinary this way; and this hath been a known way and method of deceivers, to raise an admiration of their persons, the better to instil their opinions into them; for a great appearance of strictness and sanctity is wont to impose upon unwary people, who are apt to think that such godly men cannot be mistaken, and thence are easily persuaded to take all they say for gospel, and so implicitly imbibe all their errors. The Pharisees' frequent fastings and mortified looks drew the people after them, and by these arts false teachers have deceived many; which made St. Paul caution the Colossians, 'Let none beguile you with a voluntary humility, intruding into things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up with a fleshly mind.' Col. ii. This is briefly the sheep's clothing in which false prophets are said to come.

But what is the end of their coming? Why, that the next words declare: 'Inwardly they are ravening wolves.' Now, the wolf, you know, is a creature of prey; it comes not but to kill and to destroy; its chief design is upon the harmless sheep, whom he seeks first to divide and then to devour. The ravening wolf is the worst of its kind, and signifies one of the greatest rage and rapacity. And yet our Saviour thought this the fittest resemblance of the subtlety and cruelty of false teachers, who seek to fleece and devour the flock they pretend to feed. Of this the Pharisees were a plain instance, who by their long

prayers devoured widows' houses, and made their long robes a covering for all their rapine and oppression; and this hath been the method of their followers ever since, to carry on rebellion by pretences of reformation, and to hide sacrilege and schism under a cloak of greater sanctity. And so though the outward appearance be in sheep's clothing, yet inwardly they are ravening wolves.

But how may we know and discover these false prophets and teachers? Why, that our Saviour informs us: 'Ye shall know them by their fruits: do men gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles?' Such sweet and pleasant fruit cannot spring from a dry and different stock; no more can sound practices proceed from rotten and corrupt principles. The rule or mark of distinction here given by our Saviour, for the discovery of false teachers, is, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits:' it is not by the leaves or blossoms of a specious profession, but by the real fruits of a suitable practice.

But what are these fruits by which we may know them? Why, it is by the fruits of their doctrine, and the fruits of their lives.

1st, I say, false teachers may be known by the fruits of their doctrine; not indeed always by the matter of their doctrine, for false teachers may sometimes preach doctrines that are sound, orthodox, and true; but by the ends, tendencies, and consequents of them, which are most properly styled the fruits of their doctrine: such as 'prophesied falsely in God's name,' and, as some would have them, 'prophesied smooth things, deceits, and lies, sowing pillows under men's arms to hunt souls;' soothing them in their iniquities, and 'saying Peace when there was no peace;' were of old styled 'false prophets,' who 'daubed with untempered mortar,' as we read in Jeremy and Ezekiel. And such are they who still flatter men, especially great persons, in their vices and follies, and deal unfaithfully with them committed to their charge, for by-ends.

There are others who perhaps may preach sound doctrine, but not from good principles, or for right ends; viz., not for the glory of God, or the good of men's souls; but for their own glory, and to promote some worldly interest. St. Paul speaks of some who 'preached Christ out of envy and strife,' not of 'good-will,' but of 'contention,' and therefore 'not sincerely.' Phil. i. 15, 16. And we have some who vent doctrines tending to the breach of peace and unity in the church of Christ, and to promote sedition, faction, and disobedience in it: such as these are justly reckoned in the number of false teachers, who 'serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies.' St. James speaks of a sort of 'wisdom,' that is attended with 'bitter envying, strife, and dissension,' which leads to 'confusion and every evil work:' and this wisdom, he tells us, 'descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.' But the 'wisdom that

is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.' By these marks we may try the fruits of men's doctrine, and thereby know the false teachers from the true.

2dly, We may know them by the fruits of their lives; for wicked practices flow from evil principles, and plainly demonstrate the falsehood of them. As false premises always infer a false conclusion, so a bad life discovers the naughtiness of the heart, and the unsoundness of the profession. It is true, indeed, a wicked life doth not always denominate a man a false teacher, for a bad liver may sometimes preach true doctrine: in which case our Saviour's direction is, 'to do as they say, and not as they do; for they say and do not.'

But, for the most part, men's practices are suitable to their principles, and the debauchery of manners proceeds from the debauchery of the mind; though this, as all other rules, may admit of some exception.

Again, it must be granted, that some men may so artificially colour over and disguise their evil deeds and designs, that it is not easy to discover the badness of them: but yet here, too, the disguise often drops off, and the wolf appears under the sheep's clothing; the cloak in time wears out, and the hypocrisy may be seen through the thinness of the covering. But where men's wickedness is more open and scandalous, where their lives are vicious or factious, where they manifestly sow the seeds of discord and dissension, fomenting division and separation, and thereby kindling mutual heats and hatred against one another; there we may safely conclude them to be none of Christ's husbandmen, to sow his good seed, but some of Satan's emissaries and instruments to plant his tares.

Again, where men persuade to do evil that good may come, casting off known duties, and allowing themselves in apparent violations both of divine and human laws; these are all evil fruits, and they whose doctrines or practices lead to the growth of them, are some of the false prophets or teachers, that we are here exhorted to beware of and to avoid.

But our Saviour goes on to illustrate these things by the similitude of a tree and its fruit; for having before intimated, that 'men do not gather grapes of thorns,' but of the vine; 'nor figs of thistles,' but of the fig-tree; he adds, 'even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit;' meaning, that the fruit partakes of the nature and goodness of the tree from whence it proceeds; so that if the tree be good, the fruit will be good also; but if the tree be evil or corrupt, the fruit will be so too. Even so good principles, if firmly rooted in the mind, will bring forth the good fruits of sound doctrine and a suitable practice; but evil principles, if got there, will produce the bad fruits of error and unsound practices. St. James explains it by the similitude of a spring or fountain;

where, if the waters are pure and clean, it will send forth clear and wholesome streams; but if the waters be foul and polluted, the streams that issue from it must be so too; for 'a fountain cannot at the same place send forth sweet waters and bitter.' James iii. 11. In like manner, 'a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.' Luke vi. 45. So that as a tree is known by its fruit, so is the man by his manners; which is so true, that our Saviour adds, 'a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' But here we must note, that what is here said of the tree and its fruit, must not be applied always to persons, but mostly to principles; for if we apply it to persons, it will sometimes prove otherwise; for the best of men having something of evil in them, sometimes bring forth evil fruit; and the worst of men having something of good in them, sometimes bring forth good fruit: this is so evident from the failings of good men, and the good works of bad men, that it needs no farther proof. But if we apply it to principles, it will ever hold true; for we may say of evil and corrupt practices, that they always come of evil principles; and of good and sound doctrines, that they always come from good principles; no opinion truly good can promote any moral evil, and no opinion truly evil can advance any moral good. In this case it hath been rightly observed, that the tree that is once corrupt will always be so, and nothing but corruption can come from it; and the doctrine that is once good will still continue such, and never degenerate into evil. In a word, all that is good cometh from God, the author and fountain of all good; and all that is evil cometh of the devil, who is the father and fountain of all evil. So that by the goodness or badness of the fruit, we may be able to judge both of teachers and their doctrines, whether they come from God, or proceed from the evil one.

And this we are the more narrowly to search and look into, because our Saviour tells us, in the next words, that 'every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be hewn down and cast into the fire;' that is, every one's principles and practices shall shortly undergo a trial; they who have built upon the foundation of Christianity, sound doctrines, and the fruits of a holy life, which the apostle compares to 'silver and gold, and precious stones;' all such shall 'receive a reward;' but they who build upon it 'the hay and stubble' of errors and divisions, and other corrupt fruit, shall 'suffer loss,' and both they and their works shall be 'cast into the fire.'

'Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,' saith our blessed Saviour; that is, by the fruits of their doctrines and their lives. This is the test or touchstone here given us to try false teachers by; it is not by their words or specious pretences;

for 'not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.' Where, by saying 'Lord, Lord!' is meant the making an outward or open profession of Christ, either by being called by his name, as in baptism, wherein we own him for our Lord and Master; or by calling upon his name, as in our prayers, wherein we say, 'Lord, Lord!' in token of our subjection to, and dependence upon, him. Now, this outward profession, or saying 'Lord, Lord!' is not of itself sufficient to bring us to heaven; for this may come only from the tongue or the teeth outward, without the real service and subjection of the heart; and therefore our Saviour adds, that it is the doing the will of our Father in heaven that can alone bring us there. It is a sincere, entire, and universal obedience to God's laws, that only entitles to the kingdom of heaven, without which neither pastor nor people, by any other methods or pretences, shall ever arrive thither.

Thus we see who are the false prophets or teachers we are bid to beware of, what is the manner and end of their coming, together with the marks and tokens to discover or discern them by.

It remains only to exhort you to use your greatest caution and circumspection in this weighty affair. Both Christ and his apostles tell us, that many false prophets are gone out into the world, and that they use all possible arts and devices to impose upon and deceive the people: it is therefore seasonable advice, to watch and guard yourselves against their delusions. Remember that it is both easy and dangerous to be deceived by them; the sheep's clothing they put on makes it easy, and the ravening wolf that lies under it makes it dangerous. The sheep, you know, may be easily betrayed, if the wolf come in the habit and disguise of a sheep; and it is no hard matter for the unthinking vulgar to be imposed upon, when the seducer comes in the appearance of a saint. A plausible show of zeal, a loud cry of reformation, of greater purity of worship, of better means of edification, and the like, have cheated many into schism and sedition. When these impostors have insinuated themselves into the esteem and affections of the people, and brought them to a fond admiration of their persons, they then lead them where they please, by an implicit faith and blind obedience; and the people become ready to receive and swallow whatever they prepare for them.

And as the deceit is easy, so is it exceeding dangerous; for false teachers are said in Scripture to have the windings and doublings of the serpent, the subtlety of the fox, and the rapacity of the wolf, from all which there cannot but be great danger to the flock of Christ: which should make them take heed of wandering from the fold, but keep together, as sheep are wont to do, when any danger seems to threaten or annoy them.

Lastly, From the rule here given to know false teachers by

their fruits, let us learn to bring their doctrines and practices to this test, and see whether they tend to promote the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, patience, and the like; or whether they lead to the works of the flesh, which are wrath, strife, hatred, variance, heresies, and divisions; and accordingly receive or reject them: so shall we avoid the ways of error and dissension, and be kept in the paths of peace and truth, which lead to eternal life; to which God, of his infinite mercy, bring us all, for the merits of Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE CCXVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Cor x. 1—14.—*Brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink,* &c. *But with many of them God was not well pleased,* &c.

The collect for this day beseeches God to grant us the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we who cannot do any thing that is good without him, may, by him, be enabled to live according to his will. Accordingly,—

The epistle for the day teaches us to think aright concerning the church, both under the law and under the gospel; and likewise to do aright by the directions of it under both dispensations. And because, of ourselves, we can neither think nor do as God would have us, we are to implore the assistance of his Holy Spirit, to enable us to please him in both. Lest Christians now should boast of higher and greater privileges than the Jews had of old, and so be exalted above measure by the abundance of the gospel-revelations; the apostle tells them, that the Israelites of old were the people of God as well as we, and had the like favours and miraculous works vouchsafed to them under the law, as are now afforded to us under the gospel: and as they were punished for their ingratitude and abuse of God's mercies, so we may not hope to go unpunished, if we run into the like enormities.

This is the drift of this day's epistle, where the apostle, in the first verse, 'would not have us ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea.' By 'our fathers' here are meant the ancient Israelites, to whom we succeed in the covenant made with them, and in the title of his church. By these fathers being 'under the cloud,' is meant their being under the particular care and conduct of the Divine Providence; that they had the favour of a cloud to overshadow them, to keep them from the scorchings of the sun, and the injuries of the weather. The expression refers to what is said of the Israelites in their passage through the wilderness, viz., that 'God went

before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night.' Exod. xiii. 21. And the same is affirmed by the Psalmist, Psal. lxxviii. 14. Where, by the pillar of a cloud and of fire, we are not to understand any solid body of a pillar moving and leading the way before them, but of a hollow and luminous body shining and hovering over their heads like a dove, at once directing and overshadowing of them: to which the Psalmist refers, saying, 'Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice,' and 'Thou shalt hide me under the shadow of thy wings.' So that the expression here signifies God Almighty's great care in protecting and preserving the Israelites from all dangers.

This the apostle would have these Corinthians and all Christians to know concerning them; and likewise that they 'all passed through the sea;' meaning, that they went safe through the Red Sea, the waters standing like a wall on each side to give them a secure passage; which Pharaoh and his host, who were then pursuing them, attempting to do, were overwhelmed and drowned in the waters. This the apostle styles a sort of baptizing them into the belief of Moses's doctrine, in the next words; 'And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;' meaning, that that cloud and that passage through the Red Sea, which were used as a means to confirm the ministry of Moses, was a type of baptism; signifying, that as the Israelites of old being saved from and by water, were converted to the belief of the doctrine delivered by Moses, so we, being born again of water and the Holy Ghost, are thereby initiated and confirmed in the doctrine delivered by Christ. To which it is added, in the next verse, that 'they did all eat the same spiritual meat;' meaning, that the manna which fell down from heaven, and was fed upon by the Israelites in the wilderness, was a type of the holy sacrament instituted by Christ in the gospel; and their feeding on the former conveyed to them the same spiritual and heavenly nourishment that we now receive by the latter: for which reason they are here said to 'eat the same spiritual meat.'

And, as the next words tell us, 'They did all drink of the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ;' that is, as the manna that was rained down on the Israelites in the wilderness afforded them spiritual meat, representing the spiritual food we receive in the Lord's Supper; so the water that issued out of the rock upon Moses's smiting of it, of which we read, Exod. xvii. 6, afforded them spiritual drink; typifying the blood of Christ, which we drink in the holy sacrament. And 'this rock' is here said 'to follow them;' which cannot be meant of the rock itself, which was a fixed unmovable body, but of the water that flowed out of the rock, and followed the Israelites many years in their journeying in the wilderness: for in all their change of stations for almost thirty-eight years, we never read of any want of water, though

they travelled all that while in a dry unwatered wilderness; of which no other reason can be given, but that the water of the rock, like a river, ran after them, and (as it is here affirmed) followed them. And that this water was spiritual or sacramental drink, appears by the next words; 'And this rock was Christ:' not materially, but spiritually; for as the sign is often put for the thing signified by it, so the rock here is called Christ, who is meant and signified by it. The resemblance whereof lies chiefly in these two things:

1st, As the rock yielded no water before it was smitten with the rod of Moses, so was Christ smitten upon the cross, and 'his side pierced with a spear,' before there issued from him that sovereign stream of 'water and blood,' of which 'he who drinketh shall never thirst more.' Again,—

2dly, As this rock yielded water not only at the place where it was broached, but followed the Israelites in all their stations in the wilderness; so that water which gushed from our Saviour's side, served not only those that were present at his sufferings, but hath followed Christians from the day of his passion to this hour.

But how are the Israelites said to 'eat the same spiritual meat,' and to 'drink the same spiritual drink with us?' Why, it is the same, though not in sign, yet in substance and signification, unto both: for they are seals of the same covenant, they represent the same sacraments, and convey the same promises, blessings, and graces to both.

So far the apostle sets forth the many and great privileges, which the people of the Jews enjoyed in common with us. They had the same sacraments, though represented by different signs and symbols; by their manna in the wilderness, and the paschal lamb in the passover: they did eat the same spiritual meat with us; and by the water flowing out of the rock, they drank the same spiritual drink with us in the holy communion. And, by both, they had the same graces and favours vouchsafed to them, though couched and shadowed out to them in temporal blessings and promises. And this is what the apostle would have us know, or not be ignorant of, lest we should think too highly of ourselves, or too meanly of them.

But how did these Israelites use these signal favours and blessings? And what followed thereupon? Why, that the next words tell us: 'With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.' By which it appears that many of them made a very bad use of those great blessings, and abused the mercies of God to very evil purposes, as we shall see after. The sad condition of those persons is here set forth by two expressions:

(1.) That 'God was not well pleased with them.' And,—

(2.) That 'they were overthrown in the wilderness.' Both which shew us the wretched and lost condition of all unworthy receivers of these holy mysteries.

(1.) The misery of their condition is here set forth by God's not being 'well-pleased with them;' which phrase implies more than it seems to express: for it signifies not only God's not being well-pleased, but his being highly displeased with them, that he was much incensed, and that his wrath was hot against them. Indeed, it is the greatest degree and measure of unhappiness, to be out of the favour of God, and to be one of those with whom God is not well-pleased; for then nothing we say or do is acceptable, but an abomination to him. When God the Father declared his great love and favour for his beloved Son, he expressed it thus, that in him 'he was well-pleased,' Matt. iii. 17; signifying thereby the highest happiness. And when he here declared his just indignation against these ungrateful Israelites, he thus expresses it, that with them he was not 'well-pleased;' which denotes the height of misery. And this is farther confirmed to us,—

(2.) By the punishment that befell them, for 'they were overthrown in the wilderness;' that is, by the just judgment of God for the gross abuse of his mercies, their carcases dropped in their passage through the wilderness, and two only, viz., Caleb and Joshua, survived to reach the promised land of Canaan. Now, Canaan was the type of heaven; the wilderness signified the passage through this wild and barren world; to fall in the wilderness, was to come short of the heavenly Canaan; and the persons that did so were those, to whom God sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest. So that the sense of it is, that they who did not use aright the pledges and privileges bestowed on them, were deprived of eternal life. Thus we see how the unworthy receivers of that spiritual meat and drink in the wilderness were punished with temporal death in this world, and with eternal death and damnation in the next.

'Now these things (saith the apostle in the next words) are our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted;' that is, they are lively representations and lessons of instruction, to teach us to keep ourselves pure from their vices, to glorify God for his mercies, and not to gratify our lusts as they did; and to learn, by their punishment, to fear the judgments of God falling upon us, if we follow and transgress after their example. 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime (saith St. Paul in another place), were written for our learning;' to teach us to avoid those rocks against which others have split, and to obtain that blessedness, which their ingratitude deprived them of. To which end, the apostle warns us, in the following verses, against many of their sins that unhappily occasioned their destruction. As,—

1st, He cautions against idolatry, ver. 7; 'Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.' Idolatry, of all kinds, is a sin highly displeasing and hateful unto God; being a total falling away from him, and a preferring other things in our love

and choice before him; it is a robbing God of his honour, of which he is infinitely tender; and the giving his glory to another, which cannot but highly provoke him: especially considering, that he hath declared himself a jealous God, and hath threatened to visit this iniquity upon the persons and posterity of those that commit it. And yet the Israelites often fell into this heinous and provoking sin: an instance whereof we have here in the molten calf, whom they worshipped with luxury and riot, with licentious feasts, and lewd plays; 'Sitting down to eat and drink, and rising up to play;' as we read, Exod. xxxii. 4, 6, 8.

2dly, He cautions against fornication, ver. 8; 'Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.' This was another sin of the Isralites, of which we read, Numb. xxv. 1; where 'the people of Israel' in their 'abode at Shittim,' are said 'to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab;' for which, as also for their joining in the idol-sacrifices, God sent a plague among them, that destroyed in one day three and twenty thousand of them. So far is fornication from being (as some would have it) a venial sin, that needs no great regard or repentance, that it drew down the sorest and severest judgments upon the committers of it; and, instead of a pardon, brought a deadly and wasting plague upon them: which should teach us to beware of defiling our bodies, which are to be consecrated as temples to the Holy Ghost; and not to make the members of Christ to become the members of a harlot.

3dly, The apostle, from their example, cautions against tempting of God, ver. 9; 'Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.' Of this sin of the Israelites we read, Numb. xxi. 5, 6; where they are said to tempt God by loathing the manna that he sent them, and asking meat for their lusts; for which reason, 'the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, and they bit the people, and much people of Israel died,' ver. 6. From whence we may learn to beware of being weary of the gospel, and of loathing the spiritual food recommended in it, lest God let loose Satan, that old serpent, upon us, first to sting, and then to destroy us.

4thly, Here is a caution against murmuring, ver. 10; 'Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.' This sin of murmuring was the great and famous sin of the Israelites, who were apt to murmur and complain against God upon all occasions, even when he had done the greatest things for them. The place here chiefly referred to, is Numb. xiv. 2, 3; where we read, that 'all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron; and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness! Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should be made a prey?' &c. Where they unthankfully twit and upbraid their Maker with all

the mercies he had bestowed upon them; which provoked God to send a plague among them, and to sweep them all away by his destroying angel, vers. 36, 37, and chap. xvi. 41, &c.

'Now all these things (saith our apostle) happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come;' that is, all the sins and judgments on these Israelites, who received such wonderful mercies at God's hands, and yet sinned so foully, and were destroyed so miserably, are so many warnings to us Christians to beware of their sins, lest we feel and fall by the same punishments. And these things are recorded and derived down to us in the last age of the world, on purpose that we should amend and take warning thereby. From all which the apostle, in the next verse, infers,—

5thly, A caution against presumption; 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall;' that is, since these Israelites, who had such great advantages of standing, having the same spiritual meat, and the same spiritual drink with us, and from thence might be supposed to receive spiritual strength enough to withstand all temptations; if they yet fell so foully into so great evils both of sin and punishment, let none of us presume upon our strength, but let us all look warily to our steps, lest we fall into the like enormities. We are apt, indeed, to think too well of ourselves, and to say, with David, 'Our mountain stands so strong that it cannot be moved;' and yet, if left to ourselves, may, with him, fall into great sin and misery. Peter was so confident of the strength of his faith, and his standing firm to his Saviour, that he boldly declared, 'If all the world should deny him, yet would not he deny him;' and yet soon after he denied him shamefully, and that not once only, but thrice, with many bitter oaths and imprecations: which may teach us not to presume too much upon our standing, but to pray that 'our faith fail not,' and that 'we fall not into temptation.'

And, lest any should despond under the greatness of his trials, or his own weakness to undergo them, the apostle adds these comfortable words in the close, saying,

'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it:' where we have two strong motives to patience and consolation under all the trials and hardships that may befall us. The

First is taken from the commonness of them; 'There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man.' No reasonable man can grudge to bear a share in the common lot of mankind, or hope that God should alter the course of his providence only for his sake: and since God is pleased, for wise reasons, to exercise even the best men with trials and afflictions, it must be very unreasonable to refuse to taste of that bitter cup, of which others drink before and with us. The

Second is taken from the security here given of sufficient strength to bear them, and of a happy issue and deliverance from them; both which are grounded upon the fidelity of our Maker; for 'God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape;' which is abundantly enough to relieve and support us under them.

This is the substance of this day's epistle; which will afford us many observable things, which I shall only mention: as,—

1. From the Israelites eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink with us, we may learn that they had the same covenant of grace that we now have, and were saved the same way, even by faith in Christ, as we now are; for where the seals and sacraments of the covenant are the same, there the covenant must be the same also.

2. From the many plagues and punishments that befell the Israelites for their ingratitude and breach of this covenant, we may learn to fear and expect the same upon the like disobedience; for 'if every transgression and disobedience of Moses's law received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' Heb. ii. 2, 3.

3. From the caution here given against presumption, let us learn to suspect ourselves, and not be too confident of our standing; but look narrowly to our ways, to prevent our falling; taking the apostle's advice, to 'walk circumspectly, not as fools,' &c., but as wise.

Lastly, From God's finding a way to deliver us under the greatest trials, let us learn at all times to put our trust in him, and in the use of good means to rely upon his providence; so shall we be secure in all dangers, and safe from all our enemies; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xvi. 1—10.—*Jesus said unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, who had a steward, and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods; and he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself*, &c.

IN this gospel for the day, we are presented with the parable of the master and the unjust steward; in which are figuratively represented to us,—

1st, The great bounty and goodness of God in dispensing his blessings.

2dly, The great injustice and unfaithfulness of men in wasting and abusing of them.

3dly, The great danger and difficulties that ensue upon so doing. And,—

4thly, The best means to prevent these evils, and to turn the good things to a better account. These things are contained in this parable, and comprise the whole of this day's gospel. The parable was delivered by 'Jesus unto his disciples,' and begins thus:—

'There was a certain rich man who had a steward.' Where, by the 'certain rich man,' we are to understand God Almighty, the great landlord and proprietor of the world; whose 'is the earth, and the fulness thereof.' By the 'steward' is meant all mankind, with whom he hath entrusted his goods and talents; for 'the earth he hath given to the children of men,' with all the fruits and product thereof, to some more, and to some less, but to all some, expecting an account and improvement from them all according to their proportion; for he hath not made them owners or proprietors, but only stewards and dispensers of his blessings, to be disposed of according to his will and direction. Which shews us from whence all our gifts come, namely, from God, the great Lord and Donor of all things; for 'every good gift, and every perfect gift, (saith St. James,) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' James i. 17. And likewise the ends for which they are given, to wit, for the honour of our Master, and the benefit of ourselves and one another. Now, 'it is required of stewards, (saith the apostle,) that they be found faithful,' in managing aright what is committed to them.

But the steward here in the parable was found unfaithful; for 'he was accused to his lord, that he had wasted his goods;' instead of employing them to his master's use, he had mispent them in riot and prodigality, and so wronged his master without any benefit to himself; as prodigals are wont to do other men harm, and themselves no good. This improvident and unfaithful behaviour coming to his master's knowledge, as unthrift and prodigality seldom escape discovery, the master called him to him, and said, 'How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayst be no longer steward.' Every master may, and much more our great Master in heaven, call his servants and stewards to an account for embezzling his goods, and discharge them too of their office, for the unfaithful discharge of it: so he did with this unjust steward, and so he will do with all wicked and unprofitable servants; which should teach us fidelity in the trust committed to us, and in any place or office whereunto we are called, lest we be brought to a reckoning, and with shame and misery be discarded from it.

But what did this unjust steward when he was turned out of service? Why, 'he said within himself, What shall I do; for my lord taketh from me the stewardship, I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed?' Sin and wickedness deprive men of God's blessing;

it puts them out of his favour and protection, and leads them into many straits and difficulties. This wicked servant lived in ease and plenty in his master's service, he wanted nothing but grace to make a better use of what he vainly squandered away; and now he lived to want that which he so wantonly wasted: having made no provision for this sad time, he was at his wit's end what to do for a livelihood; to dig for it by his labour, he could not, and to beg for it by way of alms he was ashamed. However, something must be done, and that speedily too, or starve: casting, then, awhile about him, 'I am resolved (saith he) what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' And what was that? Why, it was to ingratiate himself with his lord's tenants and debtors, and to make such abatements in their accounts, as might oblige them to be kind to him in distress, and to harbour him upon occasion. This project we have in the fifth, sixth, and seventh verses; where we read, that before he gave up his accounts, 'he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? He said, An hundred measures of oil: then said he unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty.' Where he struck off half the sum, bidding him write it down quickly upon his bill, that their books may agree, and so avoid all suspicion of mistake or misreckoning. 'Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat: he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore.' Where he struck off twenty measures of wheat, every measure containing a great quantity, and being the same with the Hebrew 'omer,' amounted to a great sum; him too he commanded to write down in the foot of the bill, that there might be no difference in the account, and so no discovery. The like he did with all the rest, making favourable entries into all their books of account, in hopes that having gratified so many persons by such large abatements, they would remember him in time of need; and that some of them at least (though others should prove ungrateful) would stand by him, and make some amends for his kindness.

But how did the master take all this? Why, the next words tell us, that 'the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light;' not that he liked his dishonesty or unfaithfulness, for he gives him the character of an 'unjust steward;' but he commended his wit in contriving a way how to help himself when he was out of service, and providing against a time of need. And, indeed, this was the main design of the parable, to teach men to lay up for themselves a good foundation, and to have a provident care for the time to come. The master seems to take little or no notice of the way or manner of his providing for himself, much less is there here any approbation of, or encouragement to, the fraudulent or false

dealings used by him for that purpose. This was beside the design and intention of our Lord in this parable, and is therefore passed over in silence; and no argument is to be taken from any incidental circumstance, but only from the main scope, end, and intention of a parable. That which the master here commends, is not the injustice, but the wit and forecast of this unjust steward, his dexterous projecting a way for his future subsistence, and laying a scheme to help himself in time of necessity; this is that wherein he is said to 'have done wisely:' it being much wiser to apply the mind to the finding out a way of living, than to starve and pine away through negligence and inconsideration.

The master's commending this steward's wisdom, was in some measure to recommend his example to us, not, indeed, as to the same way or manner, but to the same care and diligence in making a prudent provision for ourselves, as he did; and in the like, though not in the same way. So that two things are here recommended to our imitation; the one relating to the end, the other to the means.

The 1st is, that as this steward was careful for his body, to provide a maintenance for the preserving his natural life; so should we be as careful for our soul, to seek out such spiritual food, as may preserve and cherish it to life everlasting. And,—

2dly, As this steward provided for himself out of his master's goods, by disposing them into other hands, from whence he might have some return; so should we lay up a portion for ourselves out of the goods entrusted us by our Master in heaven, transferring them into those hands, from whom we may receive them with advantage. Which we should the rather do, because he traded only in earthly, temporal, and perishing goods; whereas we deal in heavenly, spiritual, and more enduring substance.

In short, then, the master's commending the wisdom and providence of this unjust steward, teaches us to take the same or greater care for our souls, than worldly men do for their bodies; and to be as wise and diligent in providing for eternity, as they are for a little time here in this world. The general neglect whereof made him add, that 'the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.' Where,—

By the children of this world, are meant such as addict themselves to this world, and are immersed in the cares and affairs of it, whose affections are wholly bent upon the world, whose conversation is conformed to the course and practices of the world, and whose main aim and happiness is placed in the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world; who are generally called and known by the name of worldlings.

By the children of light are meant the 'children of God,' who is styled 'the Father of lights;' the followers of Christ, who is

called the Light of the world; the members of his church, who, being enlightened with the knowledge of Divine things, and aiming at the inheritance of the saints in light, are styled the children of light. In short, our Saviour mentioning two masters, God and mammon, to one or other of which all mankind belong; the servants of mammon are the children of this world, and the servants of God the children of light.

Now, our Saviour here in this parable making a comparison between these two, in point of wisdom, gives it clearly on the worldling's side, saying, 'The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.' Not that they are absolutely and in all things so; for the Scripture makes the fear of God the greatest wisdom; and Solomon, the wisest of men, styles all wicked and worldly men fools: but they are 'wiser in their generation,' that is, as to the things of this life; they shew more wisdom in managing the temporal concerns of this world, than many who profess themselves Christians do in greater and more heavenly matters. The sense and reason whereof is, that they act more prudentially and more suitably to the end they propose to themselves, than the other do in theirs. The worldling's end is the happiness of this world, consisting in the enjoyment of earthly goods; the Christian's end is the happiness of heaven, consisting in the fruition of future and eternal blessedness. Now, if we consider the ways and means that these two use for the attaining their several ends, we shall find the one acting more agreeably and wisely for the compassing his end, than the other; that is, the children of this world shew more prudence in the managery of their temporal affairs to the best advantage for the good of their bodies, than many Christians do in the spiritual concerns of their souls, and the pursuit of everlasting salvation. This is so manifest in experience, as to need no other proof. For do not many men take far more pains in the service of mammon, than others do in the service of God? How sagacious and subtle are they in seeking and finding out a good bargain! and how diligent and solicitous in the pursuit of it; and at the same time very cold and careless in matters of far greater moment! How quick-scented are they in smelling out gain at a great distance, as a vulture does the carcase, when they have no scent or relish at all of spiritual good things! How cheerful and constant are they in keeping the market, when they can scarce move over the threshold to go to Church!

But, to keep to the instance here in the parable; how provident and forecasting was this unjust steward, to take care for his future subsistence, when he found his office dropping from him, and his service like to fail! How careful was he for a moment, and how neglectful are others of eternity! And when he spared no pains, nor stuck at any means to compass a small and short maintenance here in this world, are not too many, who would be thought better and wiser, unmindful of making any provision for

a future and eternal state? Must not his provident care and diligence shame and reproach all such remissness and negligence, and plainly shew that 'the children of this world,' or the sons of darkness, 'are, in their generation, wiser' than such who would be accounted 'children of light?' Now, from this parable we are taught to be as wise for the next world, as worldly men are for this; and to be as careful for the welfare of our souls, as they are of their bodies; that as they rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, so we should be at the same or like pains to work out our own salvation. Solomon sends the sluggard to the ant, the bee, and the pismire, to learn industry, and a provident care for the time to come; and a greater than Solomon sends us here to the unjust steward, to learn the wisdom of so managing our present perishing possessions, as to secure to us an eternal subsistence, when that trust shall be at an end: that, as he made friends enough by his master's goods, to take him into their houses in time of extremity, so we may make to ourselves friends out of the substance entrusted with us, to be received into everlasting habitations. So our Saviour infers from this parable: 'I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations;' where the wealth and riches of this world are called by an untoward name, 'the mammon of unrighteousness;' and that justly too, because they are many times unrighteously gotten, unjustly possessed, unfaithfully used, and ungodlily spent.

By 'making friends of this mammon of unrighteousness,' is so to dispose of our wealth or worldly substance, as may turn to the best account here, and befriend us in the world to come.

By 'receiving us into everlasting habitations,' is, after this short life is ended, to be admitted into heaven, and there seated for ever in the celestial mansions. The sense, then, of these words is, that as this steward in the parable so managed matters by his master's substance, that when he was dismissed of the stewardship, he had thereby made friends enough to take him into their houses; so should we order and dispose of our worldly goods in such a manner, that when we fail, we may have interest enough by them to be received into heaven. Here, then, is supposed,—

1. That we all must and shall surely fail.

2. That there are everlasting habitations prepared and reserved for us against that time.

3. That our well-using and dispensing of this world's goods, will entitle us to, and instate us in, those heavenly habitations.

1. There is not a more known and certain truth, than that we all must and shall surely fail: 'The living know that they shall surely die,' saith Solomon. Our abode here is both short and uncertain, no man's riches can bribe death, or secure him from the grave; yea, they rather sink men the sooner into it, than

save them from it. David said in his prosperity, 'that his mountain was made so strong, that he could never fail;' God did but hide his face from him, and his spirits presently failed, and sunk him into great sorrow and trouble. The rich man in the gospel thought that neither he or his substance should ever fail, and therefore sung a requiem to his soul, 'Soul, take thine ease, thou hast goods laid up for many years; eat, drink, and be merry:' but he too failed before the next morning, for that very night his soul was required of him. Fail then we all must, and a time is coming when we must bid adieu to this world, and all things in it, implied in those words, 'When ye fail.'

2. Here are supposed future and everlasting habitations, when all these things fail and forsake us. So St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. v. 1. 'We know (saith he) when the earthly house of this tabernacle shall be dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' And elsewhere, that a crown of righteousness is laid up for us, when the mammon of unrighteousness fails. And St. Peter tells us, that 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in heaven for us.' 1 Pet. i. 4. But how may this be secured to us? Why, that we are told is by using and dispensing our worldly goods aright; which is here called, 'the making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.' Solomon tells us, that 'wealth maketh many friends.' Prov. xix. 4. They that abound in wealth and power shall be sure to have friends enough to partake of their plenty, and to rejoice in their prosperity.

But these are not the friends that our Saviour here would have us to make with our substance; for these commonly forsake us here in time of need, much less will they follow or stand us in any stead hereafter, for 'the friendship of this world is enmity with God.'

But the friends we are here advised to make, relate chiefly to another life, at least the returns of their friendship are to be looked for in the other world: and therefore we should not be desirous to be fully paid here in this life, or carry our recompense with us to the grave; for then we can expect nothing after, but rather leave it to be paid in exchange in another country, and to have our reward reserved for us in heaven.

But how may we thus make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, or transfer our earthly substance into the other world? Why, that is done by laying it out in works of piety and mercy; by both which we make God our debtor, who will repay more than a thousand fold.

(1.) I say, to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, is to make God our debtor by works of piety; that is, by laying out some part of our substance in pious uses, such as the building, beautifying, and endowing of churches, the advancing or supporting the service of the altar, and the like: what is thus laid out, is given unto God, and will be repaid in the other world with

abundant interest. This Solomon calls the honouring the Lord with our substance; and what is thus done for God's glory, will, in the end, surely redound to our own. God esteems himself honoured by this means, and 'those that honour him, he will honour.' It is recorded, to the glory of Solomon, that Solomon built him a temple, and that so glorious and magnificent a one too, that both that and himself became 'the praise of the whole earth.'

(2.) We make friends of the unrighteous mammon by works of mercy and charity; such as helping, counselling, and relieving the poor. By this, too, we make God our debtor, for 'he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord;' who will, in his due time, return it with unspeakable advantage. The friends we are here advised to make, are not such as are able to repay what they receive from us, for that is but traffic or merchandise: 'Give not to the rich, (saith our Saviour), lest he repay thee again. If ye do good to them that do good to you, what reward have ye? Do not the publicans and sinners do the same?' This is but *quid pro quo*, one thing for another, and carries no obligation or reward with it. But the friends we are bid to make, are such as cannot repay us again; for, by so doing, we make God our friend, who is the patron and preserver of the poor: the kindness shewed to them is reckoned as done to God; and because 'they cannot recompense thee, thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' But how they are said to receive us into everlasting habitations? Why, this may be by their prayers and intercessions to God for us; for God heareth the prayers of the poor, and sheweth favour to those that shew kindness to them. Their prayers and their alms (like those of Cornelius) ascend up to heaven, and come there as a memorial before God, who, for receiving the poor into their houses, will reward them, with receiving them into his heavenly habitations.

This is the sense and scope of this day's gospel, which I shall close up, first, with a caution against making enemies of the mammon of unrighteousness, and next an exhortation to make ourselves friends of it.

1. I say, let us learn, from hence, to beware of making enemies of the mammon of unrighteousness; and that may be done either by the ill-getting or the ill-using of this world's goods, or both. Ill-gotten goods, instead of befriending, will appear as an enemy and witness against the possessors. 'Their silver is cankered,' (saith St. James), and the rust of it will rise up in judgment against them; and having heaped up treasures by oppression and wrong, they only heap up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And so do all they that misuse and pervert the blessings of God to bad purposes, mispending their substance in riot and luxury, making it the fuel of their lusts, or the instruments of their pride and vanity: all such, instead of making friends of the unrighteous

mammon, to receive them into everlasting habitations, only make enemies of it to receive them into everlasting damnation. Wherefore,—

Lastly, Let us labour so to get, and so to use the good things of this life, that they may befriend us at last, and bring us to the true riches of heaven; and that must be by using them aright to the glory of God, and to the benefit and comfort both of ourselves and others. By thus dispensing them in acts of piety, charity, and mercy, they will speak for us, and procure for us the favour and friendship both of God and man. In a word, they will tend to our present comfort and welfare here, and promote our eternal joy and happiness hereafter. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXX.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Cor. xii. 1—12.—*Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*, &c.

THE collect for this day beseeches the Lord to let his merciful ears be open to the prayers of his humble servants, and that they may obtain their petitions, to make them ask such things as shall please him. And that we may be the better enabled to ask such things,—

The epistle for the day treats 'concerning spiritual gifts,' which the apostle here declares to be so useful and so necessary a piece of knowledge, that he would by no means 'have us ignorant of it.' And to the end that the christian church might be rightly instructed in so divine and excellent a subject, he here treats at large of the nature, the author, the number, and the use of these spiritual gifts. But, before he begins, he puts these Corinthians in mind of their former heathen state, and how they were acted and misled by evil spirits, before they received the gospel. 'Ye know, (saith he,) that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led;' meaning, that before they became Christians, they were led altogether by the heathen oracles, who pretended to foretell things to come: and their desire of knowing such things seduced them into idolatry; where all the answers and account they had in those matters, came not from the idols or the priests, but from the devil in them: and therefore that they might know those that are taught by the Spirit of God, from those that are acted by the devil, he gives us two marks of distinction to discern between them: the first is, that no man that is led or moved by the Spirit of God, will ever speak evil of Jesus;

'Wherefore, (saith he,) I give you to understand, that no man, speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed;' for that takes men off from all the heathen blasphemies, and leads to the knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus. The second is, that all that truly own and give up themselves to Jesus Christ, are acted by that Divine Spirit; for the evil spirits do all they can to hinder the doctrine and designs of Christ's kingdom; and therefore the apostle adds, that 'no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' Where we have the author of these spiritual gifts, which the apostle here tells us is the Holy Ghost, the third person in the ever-blessed Trinity, whose peculiar office, in the business of man's salvation, is to edify and instruct the Church of Christ, by which he enlightens our minds, and instils his gifts and graces into our hearts; which are therefore called spiritual gifts, not because they are seated in the spiritual part or soul of man, but because they proceed from the Holy Spirit of God: which we must not so understand, as to exclude the Father and the Son from having any hand in these gifts, or the bestowing of them; for St. James tells us, 'that every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.' James i. 17. And St. Paul, that 'when Christ ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men.' Eph. iv. 8. So that these gifts come from the other two persons no less than from the third, according to that known rule, *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa;* the outward works of the Trinity, relating to any without them, are never divided, but what one doth they all do. But yet these gifts are more particularly attributed to the Holy Spirit, rather by way of congruity than otherwise, as referring to some particular or personal attribute of his from whence they flow: for there are some properties and perfections of the Deity, which, though common to all the three persons, yet the effects of them are more especially and severally ascribed to each distinct person; as creation to the Father, redemption to the Son, and sanctification to the Holy Ghost. And hence it is, that these spiritual gifts, which tend to the instructing and sanctifying the people of God, are more peculiarly attributed to the Holy Ghost, whose office it is. This for the author of these spiritual gifts.

From whence the apostle proceeds, in the next verse, to the number and variety of them, saying, 'Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all;' where the apostle distinguisheth between 'gifts, administrations, and operations,' observing a difference and diversity between them, and yet ascribing them all to the same author, under the titles of the 'same Spirit, the same Lord,' and 'the same God, who worketh all in all;' that is, who worketh all these things in all that have them.

As for the diversity of gifts, administrations, and operations,

they are generally thus distinguished. By 'gifts' here, are meant those inward endowments or qualifications, whereby men are enabled to do or perform any thing; these are set down in the 8th, 9th, and 10th verses of this chapter, which shall be considered in their place. By 'administrations' are meant the outward calling, function, or office, whereby they are lawfully called and authorised to do it. These are set down in the 28th verse of this chapter. By operations are meant the effects or works wrought or executed by the two former: these are too many to be set down; only care must be taken, that as every calling hath its own proper work, so every one should know and keep to it. Now all these are here said to proceed from 'the same Spirit, the same Lord,' and the 'same God;' meaning, such a Spirit as is Lord and God, and that is only the Holy Ghost.

But what was the end or use of these spiritual gifts? Why, that the next verse will tell us; 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal:' where, by the manifestation of the Spirit, is meant the exercise of the gifts and graces conferred on any by the Holy Spirit, which manifest his power and goodness to the church of Christ; and where any of these gifts appeared in any person, especially in any eminent sort or degree, it was a manifest sign that the Spirit of God wrought in him: and therefore these spiritual gifts are truly called the manifestation of the Spirit, as any other sensible effect is a manifestation of its proper cause. And this is here said to be 'given' to every man, not to be merited or purchased by any, but conferred by a free donation, and conveyed merely by a deed of gift.

But the end for which they were given, is what the apostle here chiefly aims at. The 'manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man;' but for what? Why, 'to profit withal.' It is not to please or pride ourselves, and so to use them for vanity and ostentation; to set forth ourselves, or to raise admiration in others by our eloquence or elaborate arts of speech, as some of these Corinthians did, and too many in our days still do: much less were they given to raise schisms and factions in the Church, by instilling the poison of errors and divisions into the minds of the people, and sowing the seeds of discord and dissension among them. To this bad use many of the Corinthians put their spiritual gifts, by which means they fell into divers sects and parties, some saying, 'I am of Paul, others I am of Apollo;' a third sort, 'I am of Cephas;' and a fourth, 'I am of Christ:' which made the apostle ask the question, 'Is Christ divided?' Hath he not styled his church one body, and willed that there be no schism or separation in it? How then can he like the tearing or rending one member from another in his body? Hath he not told us of 'one baptism' that leads into his church, and of 'one communion' to confirm and unite us together in it? How then can he approve of different communions, or divided ways of worship? Did not Christ press his disciples to unity? and likewise pray to his Father,

that they all might be one, even as he and his Father are one? that is, with the most entire unity of heart and mind. This was the last prayer he made for them, and the last legacy he bequeathed to them: and how opposite to this are all discord and dissension in the worship of God! They who use their parts to these bad purposes, grossly abuse the gifts of God, and will have a heavy account to make for it at the last day. For the manifestation of the Spirit was given not to do harm, but 'to profit withal;' that is, not only to procure some private profit to themselves, though that be not altogether excluded, but for the public good and benefit of others. They were given for the edification of the church, not for the destruction of it; and consequently are to be employed for the advancement of peace, unity, and order in the church, which tend to the welfare and settlement of it; not to foment and propagate divisions, or introduce strife and confusion, which lead to its ruin and destruction.

All then that have any share in these gifts and endowments of the Spirit, are to lay them out according to the degree and measure they have received, for the public good; 'As every one hath received the gift, (saith the apostle), even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.' 1 Pet. iv. 10. Where we are bid to look upon ourselves, not so much as owners, but as stewards of what we have. Now the office of a steward, you know, is not to hide or embezzle his master's goods, but to employ them for his benefit, and to give to every one of the household his portion of meat in due season. This is the end and use of all our gifts, natural and temporal, as well as spiritual; which the will of the donor, and the nature and quality of the gifts require and call for at our hands: and that because our own insufficiency of ourselves puts us in mutual need of the gifts and assistance of one another. If a man could come to that all-sufficiency in himself, as to be able to say to his brethren, 'I have no need of you,' then might he keep his gifts to himself: till then let him remember he is to employ his talent to the profit of his master, and to the benefit of his brother; for 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one to profit withal.'

For the better clearing and confirming hereof, the apostle proceeds to the distribution of these spiritual gifts; shewing that they are not all given to one, nor are the same given to all, but they are scattered with an admirable variety, and in different measures on the sons of men, that, like the various members of the natural body, they might be all helpful and serviceable to one another. There is none so mean, but may be useful to the greatest; and there is none so great, but may sometimes stand in need of the service of the meanest.

'For to one is given by the Spirit (saith the apostle) the word of wisdom.' By which we may understand the revelation of the gospel, which is in Scripture often called the wisdom of God in Christ. St. Paul styles the evangelical doctrine and mysteries by the

name of wisdom, and distinguishes it too from the philosophy of the heathens, and the wisdom of this world, 1 Cor. ii. 6, 7: 'Howbeit (saith he) we speak wisdom, yet not the wisdom of this world, but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, the revelation whereof God ordained before the world unto our glory.' This word of wisdom, or revelation of the mysteries of the gospel, was first given to the apostles, who were the first preachers and discoverers of it unto the world. And this is here said to be given by the Spirit, the Holy Ghost inspiring them with those abilities, as enabled them to understand those mysteries themselves, and likewise to publish and unfold them unto others. Again,—

'To another is given the word of knowledge by the same Spirit.' Where, by 'the word of knowledge,' is meant the knowledge of things past, present, and to come; the knowledge of things secret, such as the will of God, and the thoughts of men; of remote things, as of what was done in other places; of future things, as of what would come to pass hereafter: all which are revealed by the same Spirit, which alone can communicate to any the knowledge of these things. By this it was, that St. Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Ghost, Acts v. 3; that Agabus foretold the famine in the days of Claudius Cæsar, Acts xi. 28. By this it was, that Ananias knew the conversion of St. Paul, Acts ix. 10; and that St. Paul told the centurion, before the shipwreck, that not a man in the ship should be lost, Acts xxvii. 23, 24. The knowledge of which things could not be attained in any ordinary way, but was revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. Again,—

'To another is given faith by the same Spirit.' Where, by 'faith,' we are to understand not the common and ordinary gift or grace of faith, but a miraculous faith, by which he that had it was able to work divers kind of miracles. Of this our Saviour speaks, Matt. xvii. 20, that he who hath it shall 'say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you.' To which the apostle refers, in saying, 'If I had all faith, so that I could move mountains.' 1 Cor. xiii. 2. Others take faith here for that supernatural courage and confidence, with which the apostles were endowed for withstanding all the opposition they met with from men or devils; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, with what undaunted boldness and courage they appeared before the Jewish and heathen tribunals, still owning and adhering to the name of Jesus, notwithstanding all the threats and terrors denounced against them. This extraordinary confidence and resolution proceeded likewise from the Spirit of God, which inspired them with a courage suitable to their cause, and carried them on above and beyond all opposition. So we read of St. Stephen and others, that all their adversaries could not gainsay or resist the wisdom and spirit with which they spake. Acts vi. 10. Again,—

'To another is given the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.' By these are meant the power of curing all diseases both of body and mind, without the help of physic, by the sole mentioning the name of Jesus. Thus we find the apostles curing the blind and the lame with a word's speaking, healing lunatics and demoniacs, and casting out devils only by calling over them the name of Jesus; which made the disciples acquaint our Saviour, not only of their healing all manner of diseases, but that 'even the devils were subject to them through his name.' Luke x. 17. This power likewise proceeded from the same Spirit of God, who overrules all evil spirits, and hath all principalities and powers subject to him. Moreover,—

'To another is given the working of miracles.' This being mentioned as distinct from the former, must be meant of the power of working signs and wonders in the heavens, and more especially of raising the dead, the greatest of all miracles. So we read of the apostles, that they restored many from death to life, which is ascribed here and elsewhere to the Divine power of the Holy Ghost. Again,

'To another is given the gift of prophecy;' that is, either the faculty of expounding the holy Scripture, or the power of foretelling things to come; both which come also from the Spirit of God.

Furthermore, 'To another is given the discerning of spirits;' that is, a gift of knowing true prophets from false, and discerning the divine inspirations of God's Holy Spirit, from the evil suggestions of the devil; and thereby a faculty of distinguishing impostors and false teachers from the true ministers of Christ.

'To another is given (as our apostle goes on) the gift of divers kind of tongues;' that is, an ability of speaking several languages which they had never learnt, receiving them not by any previous art or education, but by the sudden infusion and inspiration of the Holy Spirit; which gift of tongues served as a miraculous act, both to confirm the truth of the gospel, and to reveal it to men of all nations and languages.

Lastly, It is added, 'To another the interpretation of tongues;' which shews this to be a distinct gift from the gift of tongues; for some had the one, that had not the other, not being able to interpret that in the vulgar tongue, which themselves uttered in a strange language; and therefore certain persons were enabled to speak that to the understanding of the people, which they understood not in the language in which the apostles spoke. And this was the gift of the interpretation of tongues: 'Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?' saith the apostle, ver. 30, implying these to be different gifts, and that the one might be without the other.

'But all these (saith he) worketh that one and that self-same spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will;' meaning, that they all come from the same Holy Spirit of God, who bestows

them in various measures and proportions, according to his good pleasure, for the benefit and edification of his church.

This is briefly the substance of this day's epistle, which may teach us several lessons; as,—

1. From the apostle's styling all these by the name of gifts, we may learn not to boast or be lifted up, on the account of any of them; for 'what hast thou (saith the apostle) which thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why boastest thou thyself, as if thou receivedst not?' If thou hast a double portion of the Spirit, or a larger share of these spiritual gifts than others, remember they are but given to thee, and ask thyself who made thee to differ: it was not thy own worth or industry, but the sole goodness and bounty of heaven; which may check all pride, and teach thee to think soberly of thyself.

2. If these be all the gifts of God, then we may learn hence whom to thank, and where to seek for them. All the praise and glory of them is due to God only; and therefore ascribe nothing to thyself, but thy weaknesses and imperfections. And it is prayer to him that is the best means of attaining them: 'If any man lack wisdom, (saith St. James,) let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' James i. 5.

Lastly, If the manifestation of the Spirit be given to profit withal, then let us learn to use the gifts and graces bestowed upon us to that end; let us diligently employ them in the calling wherein God hath set us, for the good of ourselves and one another; beware of abusing them to wrong ends, to the dishonour of God, or the detriment of thy neighbour: do not put thy parts to the maintenance of schism, or the disturbance of the Church, but labour to promote the peace, unity, and edification of it. So shalt thou avoid the doom of the slothful, and receive the reward of the faithful servant, to enter into his Master's joy.

DISCOURSE CCXXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xix. 41—47.—*And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee*, &c.

THE preceding part of this chapter acquaints us with Christ's going to Jerusalem, together with the manner and other circumstances of his entrance and reception into it.

The gospel for this day, which immediately follows it, lets us know his carriage upon his near approach and sight of the city: 'When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.' The reason or motive whereof was, his knowing the sad fate or

dreadful destruction that would shortly befall it; of which we read after. The thoughts of the dismal miseries and calamities that were coming upon it, drew tears from his eyes, and compassion from his heart; and both were attended with a most passionate wish, that they would yet know and consider before it be too late, what might help to prevent that doleful ruin that was hastening upon them. 'He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, O that thou hadst known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!'

Sure, the circumstances of their condition must be very sad and dreadful, when our Saviour could not see the city without weeping: but that which most of all increased his sorrow, was their stupid senselessness of their condition, that they would not so much as consider, or 'know the things belonging to their peace,' insomuch that 'they were now hidden from their eyes.' Their doom was irreversible, and therefore he pitied them the more, because they had no pity for themselves. Now here,—

1st, From our Saviour's weeping over Jerusalem, we may observe his tender sense and concern for the miseries and calamities of other men; and that may teach us to shew pity and compassion upon the like occasions. Christ was mightily affected with the evils that befell any; he wept at the grave of Lazarus, and here we find him weeping for the city of Jerusalem. From his example, we may learn the same sympathy and fellow-feeling of others' sufferings. True religion makes the heart tender, and apt to commiserate; it makes the bowels yearn towards the miserable, and to bear a share in the calamities of others. It is the hard-hearted and narrow-spirited that cast off all care or concern for others' happiness or misery; and there are but too many such, who, if they fare well themselves, care not what becomes of others; but they who shew no mercy, seldom or never find any. Again,—

2dly, From our Saviour's passionate wish, that they had laid hold of those happy opportunities, which were offered to them for their own safety, we learn his backwardness to punish, and his willingness to pardon. He doth not delight in the death of a sinner, nor willingly grieve the children of men; he is troubled and concerned for their folly, when he is driven to it, and bespeaks them as God did Ephraim, 'How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?' In like manner, our Saviour was deeply affected at the sight of Jerusalem, his bowels were turned within him, and could not but break into tears for a city that had made itself ripe for destruction. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, (saith he in another place,) how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing? and thou wouldst not.' And here, 'O that thou hadst known the things which belong unto thy peace!' which he doubles and trebles with earnestness and affection, 'even thou, in this thy day.' 'Even thou,' who hast had so many admonitions, so great obligations, and such

plain directions to prevent these evils: 'Even thou,' of whom so great care hath been taken, and to whom so much mercy hath been shewn, O that thou hadst hearkened to these things, and suffered them so far to have prevailed upon thee, as to avert thine utter ruin! Once more, 'Even thou, in this thy day;' that is, though thou hadst neglected many a call, and let slip many opportunities, yet it was to be wished thou hadst at least minded the main season, or not suffered the last and critical time of thy welfare or destruction to pass away unobserved. All which shews the merciful and gracious temper of our blessed Saviour, and likewise how opposite thereunto those unrelenting spirits are, who delight in giving trouble, and doing hard things to those of their own kind.

3dly, From Christ's wishing, in the behalf of Jerusalem, that they had known, 'in this their day,' the things that belonged to their peace, we learn that all men, both in their public and private capacity, have a day of grace, or particular season of making their peace with God, and preventing their future ruin. This is here manifestly implied, and signifies, that if we have the wisdom to know, and the foresight to improve, this opportunity to the best advantage, we may obtain the favour of God, and secure our everlasting welfare: for the having 'this their day' for that purpose, was not a favour peculiar only to Jerusalem, but is a mercy extended to all persons and places; to whom God Almighty is pleased to allot a particular time or season of reconciling themselves to him, and promoting thereby their own salvation.

Some have observed, that even in the course of worldly affairs, all men have some critical time or opportunity of making or mending their fortunes here in this life; which, if neglected or let slip, is not easily regained. Esau, that sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, could not afterward obtain it, though 'he sought it carefully with tears.' And we have known many, who have complained of the loss of some seasons and opportunities of bettering their conditions, which they could never after recover.

But this is more plainly revealed of our future and final state in the world to come; for the holy Scriptures often mind us of a day of grace, or season of salvation, in which we are called upon to mind the business of our souls, and to provide for eternity. Of 'this day,' our Saviour here minds the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and the apostle puts all Christians in mind, that 'whilst it is called to-day, they should hearken to the voice of God, lest their hearts be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Now, this day of grace and salvation may be understood either of the whole space of our life, which, for the shortness of it, is in Scripture often called and compared to a day; or else more particularly, for the present time or instant part of it, which is all that we can call our own, or safely depend upon: so the

apostle, 'Now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation.' 2 Cor. vi. 2. Hereafter may be nothing to us, because we are not sure of living to it: the present time is our opportunity, for we are not certain of any more; or if our days be prolonged, we are not sure that the means of grace may be so too, for 'the Spirit of God will not always strive with us.' Now is God's time and ours too, which we are therefore to lay hold of and improve; for we know not how long it may continue: the day of grace may be over, before the days of our life may be ended; not for want of mercy and favour in God, but for want of a will or heart to repent, to make us capable of it. The heart may be hardened by a custom in sinning, and many by long contracted habits have outlived the possibility of repentance; the conscience may be so seared, as with a hot iron, that nothing can awaken or make any impression upon it: and therefore, 'Now whilst it is called to-day,' we are called upon to repent, and to accept of mercy and salvation; and this is 'our day,' in which we are 'to know and consider the things that belong unto our peace.'

4thly, From these words of our Saviour, 'But now they are hid from our eyes,' we learn the danger of deferring repentance, or putting off the day of grace; which, if let slip, will not be had any more. This was the wretched and remediless state of Jerusalem, which made our Saviour lament and weep over it; and he who afterwards shed his blood for their salvation, here shed his tears for their folly in neglecting it. They had their day of knowing and making their peace with God; but, letting slip the season, they were left for ever to repent, without any hopes of repairing it. And it will fare no better with us, if we neglect our time, and let go the season of finding mercy; we may never look for it again, but must remain for ever in a hopeless and helpless condition. Opportunities that were once before us will soon slip away, and perhaps look back to deride our folly in not making better use of them: the things of our peace, that are now plainly in our sight, will ere long be 'hid from our eyes,' and then it will be too late to amend what we shall for ever lament. This we may easily see here in the case of Jerusalem, of whom we read in the next words:—

'The day shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' This was a prophecy of the Romans' speedy coming to besiege and destroy the city, and all that were in it; which soon after came to pass in all the particulars of the prophecy; for Titus, the Roman general, coming with an army to besiege Jerusalem, first 'cast a trench about it,' to cut off all communication, and intercept provisions; then he 'compassed it round' with a wall thirty-nine furlongs long, containing within it thirteen

castles or forts, in compass ten furlongs, all which, as Josephus tells us, was finished in three days; *de Bell. Jud.* lib. 6, cap. 8. By this the people were 'kept in on every side,' there being no possibility of their coming out; which reduced them to the greatest distress, even to the eating dung and dirt, hay and men's flesh; yea, and, as Josephus relates it, women feeding on their own sucking children. After which, the city 'was laid even with the ground, and the children within it; there being not one stone left upon another.'

But what was the reason of all this misery and desolation? Why, that is added in the following words: 'Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.' They would not know or improve the time of God's visiting them in mercy and loving-kindness; nor would they consider or prevent the time of his visiting them with vengeance and destruction, and therefore did all this distress come upon them. Obstinate and incorrigible wickedness exposes men to the wrath of God, and the sorest of all his judgments. The old world, for not hearkening to Noah, a preacher of righteousness, but going on still in their wickedness, were swept away with a deluge, and irrecoverably drowned in misery and perdition. Sodom and Gomorrah, for not amending upon the admonitions and example of righteous Lot, were consumed by a fire from heaven; and, burning in their lusts one to another, were made to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. In like manner, it was the obstinacy and impenitence of the Jews, their wilful refusal of the means of salvation, that occasioned the sacking and destruction of their city: they had many repeated warnings to avoid the danger, many loud calls and passionate invitations to repentance, to prevent their ruin; but they turned the deaf ear to them all, and nothing could prevail with them to accept their own happiness. Instead of hearkening to, they 'killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent to them;' and the judgment that followed it was, 'Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.' Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. Therefore is desolation come upon you; your city, temple, and whole nation are irreversibly destroyed: your city, for the oppression and injustice practised in it; your temple, for not hearkening to the instructions delivered in it; and your whole nation, for abusing the mercies and blessings conferred on it. Thus they who wilfully refused the offers of mercy, became the objects of vengeance, and are set forth as monuments of Divine justice to all succeeding generations, to let us know, that if we follow their steps, we must expect the same fate; and 'except we repent, we must all likewise perish.'

This is the first part of the gospel for this day, which is designed for a warning to all wilful and impenitent sinners. There is yet a second part of it, which relates to the reverence due to the temple, or the public places of God's worship, held forth in the following words; 'And he went into the temple, and began to

cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying, My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.' Where we shall observe,—

1st, That public places were set apart for divine worship both under the Old and New Testament, and that not only by the Divine liking and approbation, but by Divine appointment and designation. This is evident in the Old Testament, by the tabernacle first, and afterward by the temple; the former being styled 'the tent which God had pitched among men,' Psal. lxxviii. 60; the latter, 'the sanctuary, the high and holy place, and the place which he had chosen to set his name there:' with many other expressions to the like purpose. In the New Testament, it is plain from those words of the apostle, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, but despise ye the church of God?' 1 Cor. xi. 22. Where the church of God being opposed to houses where they might eat and drink, must be understood of the public place of God's worship, where such common and ordinary actions are not to be done. This is so fully proved by the learned Mr. Mede on that place, that I need not enlarge upon it, but refer the reader to him.

2dly, We may observe farther, that the public places of divine worship were, and still are to be accounted 'holy unto the Lord;' not, indeed, by any inherent holiness, for neither times nor places are capable of that, but by a relative holiness, because they belong to God, and are separated from all common uses, and applied only to holy and religious purposes. Thus the Sabbath day is called holy, because it is set apart for the service of God and other holy uses; and for the same reason the sanctuary, the temple, the church, are to be accounted 'holy unto the Lord,' being appropriated wholly to his use and service. From whence we may observe,—

3dly, That some kind of respect and reverence is due to such places, for the relation they bear to God, and their dedication to his worship. So God himself expressly commands, 'Ye shall sanctify my Sabbath, and reverence my sanctuary.' Lev. xix. 30. God's more immediate presence there requires from us the respect of the cap and the knee; and his promise to meet, to direct, to assist and bless us there, calls for a greater regard to be paid to it, than other ordinary places. To satisfy us herein, we may,—

4thly, Observe our Saviour's great care to keep the temple from profanation. For going into the temple, and finding buyers and sellers there, he cast them out with great indignation, and forbad the carrying of any vessel or burden through it. St. Matthew and St. Mark tell us, that our Saviour himself overthrew the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves; though they pretended to sit there for the convenience of offerings and sacrifices for the use of the temple. And St. John, that 'he made a scourge of small cords, and drove them all out of the temple;' which he did with that indignation and zeal, as made the disciples call to mind that prophetical saying of David

concerning him, 'The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up,' as we read, John ii. 14, 15, &c. From hence a learned divine hath observed, that our Saviour, whilst he was upon earth, never exercised any kingly or coercive jurisdiction, but in vindicating his Father's house from profanation, which he could not see prostituted to vile and vulgar uses, nor suffer it to be desecrated and profaned.

To all which he adds that smart saying and rebuke; 'It is written, my house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.' The saying is written in Isa. lvi. 7; 'Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.' Where we have,—

(1.) God Almighty's right or title to the temple or church asserted; for he calls it 'My house,' and justly too, being devoted and consecrated to him: by which it is made his peculiar, and no other may lay any claim, or pretend to any property in it.

(2.) We have the use to which it was designed, and is to be put; it 'shall be called an house of prayer;' that is, the place where all our solemn prayers, praises, devotion, and sacrifice are to be offered up.

(3.) We have the persons for whose use it was intended; and that is, Πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι, 'for all people and nations:' which was a prophecy of the coming in of the Gentiles, who should be all gathered into one flock, and meet in one fold, and so be all joyful together in his house of prayer.

Lastly, We have our Saviour's rebuke for profaning the temple, and converting the house of God to vulgar and common uses; making the house of prayer a den of thieves. 'Ye have made it a house of merchandise,' saith he in St. Matthew; a place of trade for selling 'of oxen, and sheep, and other cattle,' saith he in St. Mark and St. John. And here, ye have made it 'a den of thieves,' by the fraud and theft so frequently committed therein.

Having thus turned the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and so rescued it from abuse and profanation, he restored it to its right, by making it a house of prayer, and the place of teaching and instructing the people; for so the last words tell us, 'And he taught daily in the temple.' And of the apostles, we read after, that they were 'continually in the temple blessing and praising God.' Luke xxiv. 53.

Thus I have briefly summed up the whole of this day's gospel; which we may improve and apply to many good purposes. As,—

1. From God's dealing with Jerusalem, we learn his great goodness in allotting to them and us a day of grace, and giving both time and means of working out our own salvation. He is not wanting to any, in affording them ways and opportunities of being happy, but is ever ready to assist them with grace and strength to that end; yea, he importunes them to know the time, and accept the terms of peace, and sends his messengers and ambassadors to beseech them to be reconciled. Such is the mercy and

goodness of God towards his creatures, that he leaves no ways unattempted to provide for, and to compass their eternal welfare.

He doth not, indeed, force them to be happy, nor yet doom them to be miserable, but hath made them rational creatures, and set life and death before them, giving them sufficient time, strength, and encouragement, to choose the one, and escape the other. So that he hath left all obstinate sinners without excuse; and if any miscarry, their misery will lie at their own door, and their destruction is of themselves.

2. Since God hath given every one of us time and space for repentance, let us all improve it to the benefit and best advantage of our souls. We see God hath not been any way wanting to us, let not us then be wanting to ourselves; but having a prize put into our hands, let us have hearts to make a right use of it. It is the apostle's advice, to know the time, that now it is high time to awake out of the sleep of sin, and to mind our own salvation. We see how it fared with Jerusalem, for not considering the time and things that belonged to their peace, how for that reason they were hid from their eyes, and what miseries befell them for not knowing the day of their visitation. Remember that our time too is passing away; beware, then, of slipping our opportunity, which, being lost, cannot be regained. While the day lasts let us work, because the night is hastening upon us, when no man can work.

Lastly, From our Saviour's casting those that bought and sold out of the temple, and rebuking those that turned the house of prayer into a house of merchandise, or a den of thieves, let us learn to pay all due reverence and respect to God's house, and beware of profaning it by any rude or unbecoming actions; having houses to eat and drink, to buy and sell in, let us do those things at home, and not make the house of God an alehouse or a market; but preserve it pure and free from all common, and much more from all sinful uses: so shall our prayers ascend up from thence like incense, and yield a sweet-smelling savour, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Cor. xv. 1—12.—*Brethren, I delivered unto you the gospel which I preached unto you*, &c.

We are taught to pray this day for such a measure of Divine grace, that, by running the way of God's commandments, we may obtain his gracious promises, and be made partakers of his heavenly treasure. The grace here chiefly prayed for, is the grace of faith, to which the running the paths of God's commandments, and the obtaining the promises, are frequently ascribed. And in this we may be the more confirmed by the epistle appointed for the day; in which the apostle labours to establish the Corinthians, and in

them all Christians in a firm belief of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Saviour: which he the rather did, because some false teachers had crept in among them, who denied the resurrection, and had shaken the faith of many in that great article, as some have likewise attempted to do in our days.

Now to arm them against such false teachers, and to prevent the poison and contagion of their corrupt doctrines, he here gives them an antidote to keep them sound in the faith, and to confirm them in the belief of this and other great articles of it. To which end, he

First, Puts these Corinthians in mind of what he had before taught them, and how they embraced it, and for some time made no question, or entertained any doubt concerning it: so he tells them, verse 1st, 'Brethren, (saith he,) I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you received, and wherein you stand.' And the better to keep them steadfast in the faith, he,—

Secondly, Minds them not only of the excellency, but the necessity of it to salvation, ver. 2, 'By which also ye are saved;' that is, by this faith you were converted to Christianity, and turned from the darkness of paganism to the light of the gospel, and so are put into a state of salvation, which he therefore tells them was worthy to be remembered, and kept still in memory, without which all their former believing would be in vain, and to no purpose; 'If ye keep in memory (saith he) what I preached unto you,' it will assuredly bring you to salvation; but if ye forget or let it slip, and much more if ye revolt and turn from it, then our preaching to you will be in vain, and your faith is also vain. To prevent which, and to refresh their memories, he,—

Thirdly, Lets them know his fidelity in delivering his message, and imparting the truths of the gospel to them, ver. 3; 'I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received;' meaning, that he did not forge or falsify with them, neither adding to nor concealing any thing from them, but freely and fairly delivered what he was intrusted withal, and charged to communicate to them; and then gives them a brief summary of the doctrine delivered by him in this and the following verse, namely, 'How that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures;' which great points are three fundamental articles of our faith, containing what our Saviour did and suffered for our redemption, and consequently necessary to be believed by all that expect any interest in or benefit by it. The

1st Whereof is, 'That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures;' where we have the passion or death of Christ, 'he died;' and likewise the cause or reason of it, it was 'for our sins,' together with the confirmation of both, according to the Scriptures. For his death, it was the most bitter, barbarous, and bloody one that could be undergone; a death wherein the

wrath of God, the fury of men, and the rage of all the powers of darkness most fatally conspired; 'He was obedient to death, (saith the apostle,) even the death of the cross;' which, of all the Roman ways of execution, was the most painful and the most ignominious, being attended with all the cruelty and shame that could be shewed to the vilest malefactor. And of this accursed death both the Jews and Romans were the witnesses, as well as the bloody instruments.

But what was the guilt that exposed him to so heavy a punishment? Why, not his own, for he had no sin, nor was any guile found in his mouth, but ours, for which he undertook to be the propitiation. He himself was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens,' Heb. vii. 26; and so could not be liable to death upon his own score; but taking upon him our sins, he became obnoxious to the punishment due to them, and so laid down his life for the expiation. He was 'delivered up to death for our offences,' (saith St. Paul,) Rom. iv. 25. 'Christ suffered once for our sins,' (saith St. Peter,) the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God;' 1 Pet. iii. 18. And all this 'according to the Scriptures;' that is, according to the prophecies and predictions of the Old Testament, where the death and passion of the Messias is plainly foretold and recorded. All the sacrifices under the law, where all things were purged with blood, and without the shedding of blood was no remission, were but so many types and shadows of this great propitiatory sacrifice under the gospel, where this Lamb of God was slain to take away the sins of the world: of which the prophet Isaiah gave such a lively and particular account many hundred years before, as if he had lived to see it actually done. Chap. liii. 'All we (saith he) like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearer is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, he was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken.' How punctually these, and many other prophecies to the same purpose, were fulfilled in the person of our Saviour, the history of the New Testament may fully inform us.

2dly, Another point that St. Paul delivered to the Corinthians, was his burial, 'How he died for our sins, and that he was buried.' The rites of burial, you know, ever attend death, all nations interring their deceased friends. Accordingly, we read that our Saviour's body was taken from the cross, and begged by his disciples, in order to his burial; that Mary Magdalen and others brought spices to embalm him; and that Joseph of Arimathea wrapped his body in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock, and rolled a stone at

the door of the sepulchre, as we find it related by all the evangelists. And this, too, was according to the Scriptures; that is, agreeable to the predictions of the Old Testament; for we find the prophets foretold his burial as well as his death. The prophet Isaiah, who declared long before the particulars of his death, spake likewise of the circumstances of his burial, saying, 'He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death.' Isa. liii. 9. Jonas' s lying 'three days and three nights in the whale's belly,' hath been looked upon as a type of Christ's burial, or his lying 'three days and three nights in the heart of the earth;' so it is interpreted and applied, Matt. xii. 40.

The Psalmist, speaking in the person of the Messias, saith, 'My flesh shall rest in hope;' which can be understood only of his resting in the grave in hope of a resurrection.

And as Christ's burial was thus foretold by the prophets in the Old Testament, so was the fulfilling of it as plainly revealed by the apostles in the New. This truth St. Paul delivered to the Corinthians, as a thing necessary to be believed by them, for the confirmation of his death, for men are not buried before they are dead; and a preparation for his resurrection, for men cannot be said to rise, who were never dead: and a greater confirmation of his death we cannot have, than his being delivered up to it by his enemies, and his body's being laid in the grave by his friends. But

The 3d and great point of doctrine the apostle delivered to them, was his resurrection; 'That he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures;' that is, after his body had lain part of three days in the grave, viz., from Friday evening to Sunday morning, he came to life again, as the prophets long before foretold of him. This is the pillar and ground-work of all our faith and hope in him; and therefore the apostle spends all the remaining part of this chapter in asserting and applying this great article, of which I shall take notice as far as the epistle for this day reaches.

Indeed, the resurrection of Christ gave the greatest assurance of the divinity of his person, of the certainty of his doctrine, of the efficacy of his death, and of the truth of his Messiahship. And therefore no article of our faith either deserved or needed greater confirmation: in which the Holy Ghost hath not been wanting to our faith, proving it in this chapter by sundry sorts of arguments; beginning with the testimony of eye-witnesses of it, which, in a matter of fact, as this is, is the best and fullest evidence. Accordingly, therefore, the apostle gave these Corinthians a catalogue of those that saw and conversed with him after he rose from the dead.

The first whereof here mentioned is St. Peter, who was the first and chiefest of the apostles, ver. 5, 'He was seen of Cephas;' which was one of the names of Peter. He was first called Simon the son of Jonas, after, by God's appointment, Cephas, 'which is, by interpretation, a stone.' John i. 42. After that, upon his

famous confession of Christ, he was called Peter, Matt. xix.; 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church.' To him Christ shewed himself after his resurrection; so we read, Luke xxiv. 34; 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.' Indeed, the pious women that embalmed his body for the funeral, had the first news of his being risen; for they coming to his sepulchre, and seeing the stone rolled away, an angel appeared to them, and said, 'I know that ye seek Jesus, that was crucified; he is not here, for he is risen;' withal calling them to come and 'see the place where the Lord lay.' Hereupon the women ran away with the news hereof unto the disciples, some whereof looked upon it 'as an idle tale, and believed it not.' Luke xxiv. 11. But Peter arose, 'and ran to the sepulchre, and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering at what was come to pass,' ver. 12. For which reason, it is supposed, he had the honour of his first appearance; for we find the eleven declaring that he was indeed risen, and 'had appeared to Simon,' ver. 34; and St. Paul reckons him here as the first that had the sight of him; 'He was seen of Cephas.'

Next, he appeared to the twelve disciples or apostles; the eleven, saith Mark, one of the twelve being then wanting, Mark xvi. 12; where we read, he appeared to them as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with the backwardness of their belief; and because some of them took him for a spectre or apparition, and were terrified as if they had seen a spirit, he bid them behold his hands and his feet, that it was he himself; 'Handle me and see me, (saith he,) for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.' And to remove all their fears, he called for meat, and ate before them.

But Thomas, the absent disciple, would not believe upon the report of all this, but required a more sensible demonstration, by seeing the print of the nails in his body, that fastened him to the cross, and by thrusting his hand into his side, where the soldier's spear had pierced; to all which Christ graciously condescended for his satisfaction, saying to him, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.' Upon which he was fully satisfied of the truth of his resurrection, and in the strength of his faith cried out, 'My Lord and my God!' as we read, John xx. 27, 28.

'After this he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive, and present at that time, but some of them were dead or fallen asleep;' as he tells us in the sixth verse of the epistle for this day. Now these five hundred brethren were those to whom he appeared in Galilee, of whom we read, Matt. xxviii. 7, 10; who all believed the truth of it, and after testified it to the world.

After that he was seen of James, ver. 7. This James was the

brother of our Lord, whom some of the ancients affirm to be constituted bishop of Jerusalem by Christ himself, at this appearance of his unto him; for which see St. Jerome, Epiphanius, St. Chrysostom, and Theodoret, on this place.

'And last of all (saith St. Paul) he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time,' ver. 8; meaning, that though he knew him not before his ascending into heaven, and so could not see him in the flesh with the other apostles, yet after his ascension he saw him in a vision; when, being converted by him, he vouchsafed to speak to him by a voice from heaven, and exhibited himself to his sight, and received him, through his special grace and favour, into the number of his apostles, though most unworthy of that dignity: for so he acknowledges in the next verse, 'I am the least of the apostles, and not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God;' that is, his former rage in persecuting the church had set him in the rank of the meanest of the apostles, and much inferior to those who were never guilty of so vile an enormity.

However, saith he in the following verse, 'By the grace of God I am what I am;' and his grace, which was bestowed on me, 'was not in vain, for I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was given me;' meaning, that it was owing only to the mercy and favour of God, that he was what he was; and that he endeavoured to walk worthy of the grace given to him, and to make a right use of it, which he had so far improved, as to be more industrious in the work of the gospel than all the other disciples: which yet he would not in any manner ascribe to himself, but merely to the grace and goodness of God, that accompanied and assisted him in all that he did.

He then sums up what he had before delivered to them; 'Therefore, (saith he,) whether it were I or they, so we preached, and so ye believed;' that is, however that matter be, whether you look upon me, to whom Christ appeared after his ascension, or on them to whom he appeared before, you cannot have the least reason to doubt of the truth of his resurrection; for we have all preached this doctrine to you, and you have all accordingly received and embraced it. Let none then shake or stagger your faith in it, but be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and then your labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

This is briefly the sense and substance of the epistle for this day; which, by way of application, may serve to direct,—

1. The ministers of Christ, in their delivering the truths of the gospel: and,—

2. The people, in their hearing and receiving of them.

1. I say, St. Paul's delivering to the Corinthians all, and nothing but what he had received, may teach the ministers of the gospel not to come short of, nor to go beyond their commission; but faithfully to declare the whole will of God, and no more. We see the apostle concealed nothing which he had authority to deliver;

and St. Peter tells us, that 'they did not follow or publish any cunningly-devised fables, when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.' 2 Pet. i. 16. And St. John tells us, 'that which we have heard and seen, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, that declare we unto you,' 1 John i. 1, 2; teaching us to be well informed and instructed in the truth of what we deliver, before we instil or inculcate it upon others, that we may not obtrude upon them any thing contrary to sound doctrine, nor teach for doctrine the inventions or commandments of men. Moreover, the apostles frequent delivering the main points of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, may direct us to make the great fundamental truths of Christianity the chief subject of our discourses, to instil those first and necessary principles into the minds of the people; that by laying well the foundation of religion, they may be the more firmly built up in their most holy faith.

2. This epistle directs the people to hear and receive these great truths; and not only so, but to remember what they have heard and received of them, and to hold them fast. The apostle had observed some among the Corinthians, not only doubting, but even denying some of these great articles, and wavering from the faith which they had before learnt and received; this made him ask the question, 'How say some among you, there is no resurrection?' as if they were fallen away from the faith which they had once embraced, and thereby cast off all thoughts and care of a future life; saying, with the epicure, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' These he rebukes in the following words: 'Be not deceived,' (saith he,) such 'evil communications' not only destroy the faith, but 'corrupt good manners.' For they that think they shall die like beasts, will be easily persuaded to live like such: by which means they will be for ever deprived of that happiness, which they would not believe and prepare for; and likewise eternally feel that misery, which they would not fear and prevent. Wherefore,—

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, and let not Satan or the world tempt us to inconstancy, and cause us to fall from our own steadfastness. In a word, as the ministers of Christ are to preach and dispense to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, so are the people to give diligent heed to what they hear, to treasure it up in their memories, to stand firm to it, and to make it the rule and measure of all their actions; so shall both, ere long, be happy in so doing, and receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xviii. 9—15. — *Jesus spake this parable unto certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,* &c.

THE gospel for this day sets forth, in a parable, the right way and manner of praying unto God, and the certain good success that will ensue upon the due performing of it; as also a wrong way of addressing to him, too often used, with the bad issue and unsuccessfulness thereof.

It begins thus: 'Jesus spake this parable to certain, which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.' By which it appears, that this parable is designed to check the vanity of such as have too high an opinion of their own sanctity, and boast of a purer way of worship, joined with a contempt of those that go not after their way.

Who they are, the explication of the parable will after shew us: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican.' Where we are to observe the persons that went up, and they were a Pharisee and a Publican; the place to which they went, and that was to the temple; and the end or errand upon which they went, and that was to pray: all which may be worth our observation.

For the persons, they were a Pharisee and a Publican; the one the name of a sect, called, in the Acts of the Apostles, 'The strict sect of the Pharisees;' the other the name of an office, which was collector of the emperor's tribute and customs.

The Pharisees were so called from their separation, for they separated both from the civil and religious conversation of other men; they looked upon themselves as the only heavenly men, and kept a distance from others as men of the earth; calling themselves saints, and all others sinners. They blamed our Saviour for eating with Publicans and sinners, with whom they would have no fellowship, no not to eat. 'This man receiveth sinners, (saith one of them,) and eateth with them.' 'If he were a prophet, (saith another,) he would know who or what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.' They affected a pompous show of external purity and holiness, and were at great pains to polish the outward garb, without any regard how it was within. They were mighty careful of washing the outside of pots, cups, and dishes, yea, and of themselves too, when they came from markets and places of public concourse, to take off all imaginary defilement. In short, these were the

persons here mentioned by our Saviour, 'who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.'

On the other hand, the Publicans were officers appointed to gather the tribute-money, and other revenues of the emperor; which they often did with that rigour and oppression, that rendered them odious to the people, and were therefore generally ranked with sinners and heathens. However, our Saviour called some of these from the Publican's stall to be his disciples and followers. Matthew obeyed his call, and left all and followed him; and from the receipt of custom became a receiver of his doctrine, and an attendant on his person. Zaccheus, another Publican, restored fourfold; and, from an exactor of tribute, became an example of righteousness. Of this sort was the Publican here mentioned; where, by the Pharisee, is meant a precise Jew or secretary; by the Publican, a convert or penitent sinner. These were the two persons that went up; from whence I proceed,—

Secondly, To the place to which they went up, and that was to the temple: 'Two men went up into the temple.' It seems this Pharisee, whatever he was at other times, was no separatist here; for he went up with the Publican to the temple, the proper place of public prayer: for so our Saviour styled the temple 'the house of prayer,' saying, 'My house is a house of prayer,' set apart for that purpose; called, therefore, 'God's house,' because dedicated to him, where he hath promised to meet, hear, and bless his people, and to 'make them joyful in his house of prayer.' 'I was glad (saith David) when they said unto me, Come, let us go up to the house of God; our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem.' He rejoiced to see the people unanimously repair to the temple, the public place of God's worship; and for himself he tells us, that the love or 'zeal of God's house had even eaten him up:' so much delighted was he in the temple of God, the place where his honour dwells. In the New Testament, we find the apostles 'daily in the temple, blessing and praising God.' Luke xxiv. 53. Yea, we find our blessed Saviour constantly repairing to Jerusalem, at the appointed times of public worship; where he frequented the temple and synagogues set apart for that end; yea, so zealous was he for the honour and reverence of the temple, that he whipped out the buyers and sellers, as profaners of it, saying, 'My house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.'

The temple, then, or the church, is the proper place of public worship, where we are commanded to resort, if we hope to be heard, or to receive a blessing; for those public places are, by God's appointment and approbation, set apart from common uses, and consecrated for his service, and, being thus devoted to him, become 'holy unto the Lord.'

Now, this may plainly convince us of the error and obstinacy of such persons as prefer a barn, a stable, or any private house,

before the church or house of God; and leave the consecrated places of divine worship, for the places of traffic and merchandise, where, beside other fraud and deceit, there are found those who 'deceive the hearts of the simple, and make merchandise of unstable souls.' St. Paul distinguishes between houses to eat and drink in, and the church of God, to worship and pray in, saying, 'Have ye not houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the church of God?' 1 Cor. xi. 22. And certainly it must be a great contempt of God's house, to frequent unconsecrated places before it: yea, the same apostle describes false teachers by their 'creeping into private houses, and there leading captive silly women.' 2 Tim. iii. 6. Holy David preferred 'one day in God's house before a thousand elsewhere,' and 'had rather be a door-keeper in the house of God, than be found in the tents of ungodliness.' And surely, a greater blessing may be reasonably expected in the public assemblies of God's people, than in the private meetings and conventicles of sectaries; which should teach us to frequent the public places of Divine worship, and to forsake the private nurseries of discord and division. This for the place.

They went up to the 'temple,' but for what end? Why, it was to 'pray;' the next thing to be considered. Both the Pharisee and the Publican went to the same place, and upon the same errand, to offer up their prayers and devotions unto God: and a good errand it was, to meet together to pay their duty and homage to their Maker, and in the proper place designed and dedicated to that service. But how did each of them perform it? The answer to that will lead us, in the next place, to consider

The different make and manner of their prayers. And here, indeed, the difference between them was very great; for the Pharisee's prayer was attended with prolixity, pride, and hypocrisy; the Publican's with brevity, humility, and sincerity. Which things make a vast difference both in the nature, end, and issue of their prayers, as the following words of the parable will plainly declare.

'The Pharisee stood up and prayed:' here, by the way, his standing up and praying shewed some reverence, and upbraids the rude and unmannerly devotion of many in our days, who sit at their prayers, and shew less reverence in their approaches unto God, than will be allowed in their addresses unto men.

But to go on: the Pharisee 'stood up, and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican,' &c. Where he spins out his prayer into length and multitude of words, and with reflections, too, more on others than himself, measuring and extolling his own goodness by others' badness. His long prayer is not, indeed, set forth in words at length, but only the heads upon which he enlarged himself: he thanked God, not so much for his mercies, as for his own merits, that he was not so bad as other men, 'extortioners, unjust, adulterers,' and the

like; wherein he reflected upon the Publicans, who were commonly charged with those faults, from which he boasted himself to be free; and the following words, 'or even as this Publican,' plainly shew whom he had an eye at. Indeed, he was not as this Publican; for the Publican's carriage and prayer, and the success of it too, was much better, as we shall see after.

At present we may observe, 1st, That the Pharisees' prayers were often remarked, but never commended for their length; they enlarged their prayers as they did their phylacteries, and ran out their petitions into many words and vain repetitions; therein imitating the heathens, and thinking to 'be heard for their long prayers,' as they did for their 'much speaking.' And herein they are but too much imitated by the tautologies and vain repetitions used in prayer by many in our days.

2dly, The Pharisee's prayer was attended not with prolixity only, but with abundance of pride; for he enlarges himself upon the topics of his own righteousness, and, instead of being sensible of his unworthiness, sets forth his worth, and magnifies his own perfections: he does not beg of God more grace, but seems to tell him that he had enough already; and when he should ask pardon for his sins, thanks God that there was no need of it. He compares himself with others, not to humble, but to exalt himself; and instead of preferring another, or esteeming others better than himself, he proclaims his own excellencies, and prefers himself above all; 'I am not as other men,' saith he; meaning, that he was much better, being free from many heinous crimes, that they may be charged withal. He was no 'extortioner,' if we will believe himself; though our Saviour, who knew his heart, tells us, that within the Pharisees were full of extortion and excess, Matt. xxiii. 25. He was no 'unjust' person, though charged in the same chapter with rapine and oppression. No 'adulterer,' though he could 'creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with divers lusts,' whom he despoiled both of their substance and virtue together. Particularly, he despises the poor Publican, as one stained with all these things, and so not fit to be named or compared with him.

And as he thus boasted of his freedom from the vices of other men, so did he glory in his own virtues: 'I fast,' saith he, 'twice in the week;' that is, on the second and fifth day of the week, which are our Monday and Thursday, when they had the law expounded to them in their synagogues. 'I give tithes (saith he) of all that I possess;' in which they were very punctual, even to the 'tithing of mint, anise, and cummin.' These things our Saviour commended in them, though he blamed their omitting of other weightier matters of the law, saying, 'These things ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone.' Their care and conscience herein, justly condemns the robbery and sacrilege committed in these matters by many Christians. In short, the Pharisee prides himself here, not only that he was not so great a

sinner as others, but that he was a greater saint, and arrived to a higher pitch of holiness than they: a second fault of his prayer.

3dly, The Pharisee's prayer was attended with hypocrisy, the greatest flaw and blemish of all. This our Saviour proves at large, throughout the whole twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew, where he shews their long prayers and their long robes to be only a covering for their injustice and extortion; who, by their greater pretences of piety, made a prey of the simple, and devoured widows' houses. He compares them to whited sepulchres, that appeared fair and beautiful without, but within were full of rottenness and corruption; and though they took care to wash the outside of the cup and platter, yet they mattered not how foul and sluttish it was within; their fastings, prayers, and alms, were all to be seen of men, and the whole design of them was not so much directed to the glory of God, as to promote their own. Of this kind was the Pharisee's prayer here, which we see was attended with prolixity, pride, and hypocrisy.

The Publican's prayer, on the other hand, was accompanied with the much better qualifications of humility, brevity, and sincerity; for 'he standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes towards heaven, but smote on his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.' Where we may observe,—

(1.) The humility of his prayer, he 'stood afar off,' as thinking himself unworthy to draw nigh to so sacred a majesty. He had scarce confidence 'so much as to lift up his eyes unto heaven,' against which he had sinned; but shewed the greatest contrition and indignation against himself for what he had done. 'He smote upon his breast,' as conscious of the evil he had harboured there; all tokens of great modesty, and a profound humility, the first and main ingredient of an acceptable prayer. Accordingly, we find this to be the guise and practice of good men in all ages: Jacob thought himself 'less than the least of all God's mercies;' Job humbled himself even 'in dust and ashes;' David acknowledged himself 'a worm, and no man;' St. Paul styles himself, 'the chiefest of sinners;' and the Publican addresses here, not with any opinion of his own worth, but with a deep sense of his own unworthiness.

(2.) We may observe, the brevity and shortness of the Publican's prayer, which consisted only of these few words, 'God be merciful to me a sinner;' wherein he followed Solomon's direction, that in our addressing unto God, 'our words should be few,' Eccles. v. 2. Our Saviour cautioned his disciples against the 'long prayers' of the Pharisees, and 'the vain repetitions of the heathens, who thought to be heard for their much speaking,' Matt. vi.; where, to prevent such tautologies, Christ gave his disciples a short form, known by the name of the Lord's Prayer. And as his precept was such, so was his practice according; for in his agony, when he was praying, as it were for life, he used only these few words; 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me:' which request

he put up three times upon that occasion, in the same words. The disciples, in the storm, had no longer prayer in that extreme exigence than this, 'Lord, save us, we perish.' Matt. viii. 25. The blind man in the gospel followed our Saviour with this short prayer, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me,' Luke xviii. 38; that was all his prayer, which he repeated several times, with great earnestness and importunity. And here the poor Publican pours out his soul in this short form and collect, 'God be merciful to me a sinner:' and, indeed, such short pious ejaculations, darted out of a devout heart, fly higher, and pierce deeper, than the longer harangues of the hypocrite. And this will lead me to the

Last, Though not the least ingredient of the Publican's prayer, and that was sincerity; implied in these few hearty words, 'God be merciful to me a sinner:' which proceeded not from the flatteries of the tongue, but from the inward longings of a devout heart. Instead of insisting upon his own righteousness, he acknowledges his own vileness; and when the Pharisee looked upon himself as a saint, this poor Publican owns himself a sinner: he does not, with the proud Pharisee, thank God that he was better than other men, but reckons and ranks himself among the worst of them; and, instead of boasting of his merits, only begs for mercy, and casts himself wholly upon it: all which are signs of great sincerity.

Thus we see the difference between the Pharisee's and the Publican's prayer: the one was long, proud, and arrogant; the other short, humble, and sincere.

But what was the event or issue of their prayers? Why, that was very different too, as the next and last words declare; 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;' that is, the humble suit of the poor Publican found better success and acceptance with God, than the conceited vaunts of the proud Pharisee; the one was absolved from his sins, and received into favour; the other had the guilt of them remaining upon him, and both his person and performances were utterly rejected. He that justified himself was condemned, and he that condemned himself was justified before God: for which this reason is added in the close; 'For every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.' This conclusion our Saviour draws from the foregoing parable, and is, indeed, the standing rule of Divine Providence; which putteth down the haughty from their seat, 'and exalteth the humble and meek. 'God resisteth the proud (saith St. Peter,) and giveth grace only to the humble.' The proud person sets himself against God; he offers sacrifice to himself, and seeks more his own praise than the honour of his Maker; and this must set God against him, who will not be rivalled by his creatures, or give his glory to another, and is therefore concerned to humble the proud and arrogant, and to vindicate his own honour by their abasement: whereas the lowly and the humble, that give God all the glory,

and take nothing to themselves but the shame of their own misdoings, will surely be exalted by him, and rise the higher in his opinion, by being low in their own; for 'them that honour me, (saith he,) I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' 1 Sam. ii. 30. Neither is the proud man less hateful to men, than he is to God; both of them agreeing to pull down the haughty and assuming, and to shew kindness to the meek and lowly in heart.

This is the sum of the gospel for this day; which shews the qualifications of an acceptable and successful prayer: and they consist not in the length or variety of words, but in the sincerity and humility of the heart. The proud Pharisee (we see) was rather hated than heard for his arrogant and much speaking; but the poor Publican, for his short, modest, and humble prayer, found a gracious acceptance; the one went away condemned for his self-conceit, the other went home justified for his self-condemning: which may teach us to mind chiefly the good disposition of our soul, and not to affect length or vanity in our addresses unto God; for these things are neither necessary nor becoming in our approaches to the Divine Majesty. He is not to be informed by any words, as men must be; for he knows our necessities before we ask: he is not to be persuaded by many words, as men are; for he is void of all passions, and so cannot be moved or wrought upon that way: nor is he to be pleased with new words, as vain men are wont to be; for he is a pure and perfect mind, and so far above all the little gratifications of fancy and imagination. That which God principally looks to, is the heart, to find that inflamed with the love of him, and strong desires of his mercy and pardon; and where that is, a few hearty words will serve the turn, and prevail for both.

In short then, this parable may teach us, 1. To frequent the temple, church, or public places of divine worship, set apart and consecrated for that purpose; not creeping into houses, nor following the separate meetings of sectaries and seducers, which breed strife and confusion, and every evil work; but to assemble and meet together in God's house, where he hath promised to meet and bless us: and that will tend to beget love and charity, and best manifest our union and communion with one another.

2. In all our addresses to God, let us hence learn to subdue all pride and loftiness of heart, and to approach him with all humility and lowliness both of body and mind. To shew our bodily reverence, let us do it by standing or kneeling, not by sitting at prayers, as the manner of some is, who herein shew more rudeness and irreverence to their Maker, than they are wont to do before a magistrate. For the reverence and humility of the mind, let us shew it by our mean and low thoughts of ourselves; and instead of boasting with the proud Pharisee, that we are better than other men, let us rank ourselves among the worst, and say with the poor Publican, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.'

DISCOURSE CCXXIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 Cor. iii. 4—10.—*Such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the New Testament,* &c.

The service for this day puts us in mind of God Almighty's great readiness to hear our prayers, and to give more than we can desire or deserve; and from thence teaches us to implore the abundance of his mercy, for the pardon of our sins, and the pouring out of his graces upon us. To which end,

The epistle for the day speaks of putting our trust in God through Jesus Christ: 'Such trust (saith the Apostle) have we through Christ to God-ward;' which words relate chiefly to the fidelity of the Apostles in the work of the ministry, and the success they had thereby, which they looked upon as their greatest glory, and needed no other commendation; not arrogating any thing of it to themselves, but ascribing all to the power and grace of God: for in the next words he acknowledges their utter insufficiency to think or do any good thing of themselves; saying, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves:' to which he adds God Almighty's all-sufficiency to help them; 'But our sufficiency is of God.' Which they found in the exercise of a ministration far beyond that of Moses, as the sequel of this epistle will make plainly appear.

The first and great lesson here taught us is our utter insufficiency to think or do any good thing of ourselves, in these words, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves;' and if not to think, sure not to do any good thing by our own power: which made the Apostle ask the question, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' implying our natural impotence and inability to every good word or work. This is evident from many passages in holy Scripture, and likewise from many examples of human frailty recorded therein: to which we may add our own woeful experience for a proof and confirmation of this sad truth.

The holy Scriptures abound with expressions that set forth this our great impotence and inability. 'Without me (saith our Saviour) ye can do nothing;' John xv. 9. 'I can do nothing of myself,' saith the great apostle St. Paul: And if that great champion of the faith were so sensible of his own weakness, how much more ought we to own and lament our greater impotence? We can call nothing our own, but our infirmities and imperfections: all the rest is freely given us of God, 'in whom we live, move, and have our being;' and who worketh in us both 'to will and to do,' according to his good pleasure.

Moreover, the many instances of human frailty recorded in

Scripture may abundantly convince us of this insufficiency. David, when left to himself, fell into great enormities, even to the committing the crying sins of murder and adultery, which cost him a sore and sad repentance. St. Peter shamefully denied his Master after many promises and protestations to the contrary, which made him weep very bitterly; and may be a warning to all, that think of standing, to take heed lest they fall. St. Paul confessed that in him, that is, in his flesh, there dwelt no good thing. And if we consult our own sad experience, we shall find that we are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think a good thought, and much less to perform any good action.

But whence comes this utter impotence and inability to all good? Why, this proceeds partly from the original corruption and depravedness of our nature, contracted by the fall of our first parents; and partly from the evil suggestions and temptations of our ghostly enemies.

First, I say this proceeds from the original corruption and depravedness of our nature, contracted by the fall of our first parents. This is the first and great cause of all the impiety and imbecility of mankind; 'How weak is thine heart, (saith God), seeing thou hast done these things?' Ezek. xvi. 30. Indeed 'God made man at first upright,' and endowed him with faculties sufficient to enable him to do his will; but he hath 'perverted his way, and sought out many inventions.' Eccles. vii. 29. Our first parents, by disobeying their Maker, lost both their strength and their innocence together, and have derived down weakness and misery to their posterity ever since. This brought darkness into our minds, crookedness into our wills, disorder into our affections, and thereby an impotence upon the whole man. And hence it comes to pass, that we are not insufficient of ourselves to think anything that is good; 'the imaginations of the heart,' in this degenerate state, being 'evil, only evil, and that continually.' Again,

Secondly, This proceeds partly from the evil suggestions and temptations of our spiritual enemies; who working upon the corruption of our nature, increase our weakness, and render us both unwilling and unable to do any thing as we ought. These daily assault and solicit us to sin, plying us with their temptations, whereby they impair our strength, and create this impotence. Satan, the great enemy of mankind, hath his wiles, his devices, and his fiery darts to wound and weaken us. The world hath baits and snares to allure and entrap us; both which are too apt to prevail upon us, and render us too feeble to resist or conquer them. Beside which, we have an enemy in our bosom that is still ready to join issue with the two former; the 'flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh:' by which our strength is mightily weakened and impaired in the combat; insomuch that we may all say with St. Paul, The good that we would do, we do not, and the evil that we would not, that we do:

which is sufficient to convince us of our utter inability to think or do anything that is good of ourselves.

But what remedy have we in this case, or how may we be relieved under this impotence? Why, that the next words tell us, 'Our sufficiency is of God.' We are not left helpless, to sink under the burthen of our infirmities, but we have a door of hope opened for us, and are succoured by a divine hand: for though we are insufficient of ourselves, yet 'our sufficiency is of God;' and we are assisted by him who is all-sufficient, and can do more than we can ask or think. Of this sufficiency we have abundant proof from Scripture, from example, and from our own experience. The Lord himself told St. Paul, that 'His grace was sufficient for him, and that his strength was made perfect in weakness.' 2 Cor. xii. 9. This made him tell the Corinthians, that 'God was able so to make all grace abound towards them, that they always having all-sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good work.' 2 Cor. ix. 8. Hence we find the apostle declaring, that though 'he could do nothing of himself,' yet 'he could do all things through Christ that strengthened him.' Phil. iv. 13. And though 'he could do nothing against the truth, yet he could do or suffer anything for it.' 2 Cor. xiii. 8. His weakness was turned into strength; and he who was not sufficient to think or do a good thing, was able to perform the hardest task, and nothing was impossible to him. And to this the experience of good Christians can set their seals, who have found greatest assistance in times of greatest exigence, and have been thereby enabled to act not only above their hopes, but beyond their strength.

But whence is this sufficiency? Why, the text tells us, it is 'of God;' it is not of ourselves, who having nothing but impotence and infirmities to boast of: but it is of God, who hath all-sufficiency in himself, and is willing to impart what is sufficient for us. All our natural powers, whereby we perform any natural action, are wholly from him; for 'he giveth us life, and breath, and all things.' And all the supernatural aids and assistances of divine grace, whereby we do any spiritual and acceptable service to him, are more especially and entirely his; which is the sufficiency here principally intended, whereby our natural parts and powers are raised to higher degrees of spiritual strength in God's service, than of themselves they could arrive to.

And to this the apostle here chiefly refers, in saying, 'Our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New Testament;' meaning, that by the power of Divine grace, they were assisted in the work of the ministry, and enabled to do greater things for the conversion of souls, than could be done without it. It is this that makes the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished for every good word and work: by which we likewise are made 'able ministers of the New Testament;' that is, of the new covenant made with us in Christ, in contradistinction

to the legal covenant delivered by Moses, of which new covenant we are, by the ability that God hath given us, the preachers and dispensers; 'not of the letter,' which consists only in the words or writing, without any inward virtue or efficacy upon the soul; 'but of the Spirit,' which is attended with the influence of the Holy Ghost, imprinting it upon the heart, and working in the soul all the grace and virtue propounded and promised in it. 'For the letter killeth, saith he; that is, the first covenant that was written on tables of stone cannot save a sinner, but rather denounces wrath, and serves to aggravate his condemnation. 'The law worketh death,' saith St. Paul, and 'by it no flesh living can be justified. But the Spirit giveth life;' that is, the new covenant, by the aids and assistances of God's Holy Spirit, giveth life, and not only so, but preserves and maintains it by the continual comfort and communication of divine grace.

From hence the apostle takes occasion to shew the difference between the legal and evangelical dispensation, together with the glory and excellency of the latter above the former; calling the one, 'the ministration of death and condemnation;' the other, 'the ministration of the spirit and righteousness:' advancing the glory of the one above the other as far as life exceeds death, and the consolations of the spirit the miseries of condemnation. 'If the ministration of death, (saith he,) that was written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?' Where he allows some sort of glory, and that in no small degree, to the delivery of the law, which brought nothing but death with it: for its being engraven on tables of stone by the finger of God himself, and adorned with the appearance of angels at the delivery of it, and likewise with such a bright shining light, which cast such a splendour on Moses's face, that dazzled the eyes of the beholders, could not but add a glory to it; though that glory was but transient, and to be done away. From whence the apostle justly infers, that if that lower dispensation, which was only written on stone, and externally represented good things, without affording any inward grace or strength to attain to them, had yet such a glory attending the publishing of it; how much more glorious and illustrious must the dispensation of the Gospel be, which is established upon better promises, with an additional strength to perform the conditions, and to obtain the mercy granted in them? For, as he goes on,

'If the administration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory;' meaning, that if the law, which ministered only to condemnation and death, had such an outward glory to usher it in, and to set it off, how much more doth the gospel, which ministereth to life and salvation, surpass it in true and permanent glory?

This is briefly the sum and sense of this day's epistle; which we may easily improve into the following lessons:—

1. Our great weakness and inability to do any thing of ourselves, may serve to check all pride and presumption, and to keep us from trusting too much to our own strength. He that relies upon his own power, leans but upon a broken reed, which will certainly fail and deceive him. David, a man after God's own heart, and Peter, the chiefest of the apostles, found the truth hereof by sad experience; for both presuming too far upon their own strength, betrayed their own weakness, and shamefully fell into foul enormities. Which great examples may teach us to beware of too much confidence in ourselves, or relying too far upon our own sufficiency; especially we of the ministry should take heed of depending too much upon our own parts in the discharge of our office, but rather implore the assistance of God's Holy Spirit; and, instead of running before we are sent, to say with the apostle, 'Who is sufficient for these things?'

2. As the sense of our insufficiency should keep us from presumption; so should the sense of the sufficiency we have from God preserve us from despair: for though we are unable to think or do any thing of ourselves, yet 'his grace is sufficient for us;' and 'we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us;' who is never wanting to the hearty desires and endeavours of his people: for he is ever more ready to hear us, than we are to pray to him; and the returns of his goodness far exceed both our desires and deserts. So that as we may not presume upon our own power, which is no better than weakness; so neither are we to despair of divine grace and assistance, which is abundantly able to supply all defects, and to help all our infirmities, and consequently may at all times, in the use of good means, be safely trusted to, and relied upon.

3. This discourse may teach us to banish all vain conceit of merit, and to ascribe all that we have, are, or can do, entirely to the Divine bounty: for if all our sufficiency be of God, then we are nothing of ourselves, and consequently can merit nothing at God's hands; for he that can do nothing, can deserve nothing: his grace is altogether free and undeserved; we have nothing we can call our own, but our infirmities and imperfections, which are rather to be bewailed than boasted of. A due sense hereof may qualify us to receive this divine grace, but an arrogant conceit of our own worth and self-sufficiency will certainly deprive us of it; for 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace only to the humble.'

4. If all our sufficiency be of God, then let us thankfully own from whence we receive it, and duly employ what we have in his service. This is the end of all the gifts and graces bestowed upon us, that we should use them to the honour of God that gave them, and the good of them for whose sake they were given: by so doing we shall not only procure a blessing upon what we have,

but find the favour of obtaining more. He, in the parable, that employed his talents well, improved them to great advantage, and gained more; but the wicked and unprofitable servant, that hid his talent in a napkin, and made no use of it, was deprived of what he had; and, instead of entering into his Master's joy, was doomed to endless and unspeakable misery.

5. Since this sufficiency is derived to us by the gospel covenant, we learn the excellency and benefit of it above the legal dispensation. The law exacted duty, but afforded no strength to perform it; it required perfect and universal obedience to all its precepts, and pronounced a curse upon every one that continued not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them; but gave no power to keep, nor any pardon for the breach of them; for which reason, the letter of the law is said to 'kill,' and the law itself to be a 'ministration of death and condemnation;' because it left men in a hopeless and helpless state, without any remedy or relief. Whereas the gospel, on the other hand, not only requires duty, but promises grace to assist and enable to the performance of it; and therefore, as the law is styled 'the letter,' so the gospel is styled 'the spirit;' the one is said to 'kill,' called therefore a 'dead letter;' the other to 'give life,' called therefore 'the ministration of the Spirit and righteousness.' In short, the gospel relieves us from the curse and sentence of the law, by the sanctifying grace and assistances of the Holy Spirit; it requires no more than it gives strength to perform; it accepts of sincerity instead of perfect obedience; and, if we happen to fall by a temptation, it helps us to rise again by repentance.

And therefore, we should bless God for making this new covenant, and taking us under this easy and gracious dispensation: 'We are not under the law, (saith St. Paul,) but under grace;' for which we have great reason to thank God, and to make a right use of it.

Lastly, Since all our sufficiency is of God, we are taught where to seek it, and how to find it in time of need; and that is, by having recourse unto God by prayer, who hath promised to give wisdom to them that ask it, and grace to them that lack and desire it. To Him, therefore, let our prayers and praises be directed, who is able and willing to do more for us than we can ask or think. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MARK vii. 31, to the end.—*Jesus departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, came unto the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis; and they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech*, &c.

THE subject of this gospel is a relation of a miracle wrought by our Saviour on the person of a certain deaf and dumb

man, who was miraculously healed of both his infirmities; in which we may observe,—

First, Something going before it.

Secondly, The miracle itself. And,—

Thirdly, What followed after it.

First, As for what went before; it is an account of his progress, or moving from one place to another, to exercise and exert his Divine power and goodness for the welfare of mankind: so we read here, that 'he departed from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and came to the sea of Galilee, passing through the coasts of Decapolis;' and elsewhere we read of his going to Capernaum, to Cesarea, to the sea of Tiberias, and to many other places on the same errand. This St. Luke expresses by his going about doing good, Acts x. 38; where we read of 'Jesus of Nazareth's being anointed with the Holy Ghost, and with power, and his going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.' He did not confine his kindness to one place, or shut up himself by a grave retirement and sequestration from the world; but went from place to place, freely conversing and doing good to the bodies and souls of men. His charity was universal, and extended to all persons and places where he came. This was the chief business of his life, to go up and down doing good; and where he did not find, he sought out objects of his kindness and compassion, doing for them more than they could wish, or hope for themselves. He travelled not only through the country of Judea, but all the regions round about, scattering every where the influences of his bounty and goodness: instances hereof are many and great in the histories of the four evangelists, who have left upon record his excellent sayings and instructions for the welfare of men's souls, together with the various kindnesses shewed to their bodies, and both with a charity and goodness not to be paralleled; as may be seen throughout the whole four gospels.

This we observe from Christ's 'departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and coming to Galilee through the coasts of Decapolis;' which St. Mark relates here as previous to the miracle there done by him. And this will lead me,—

Secondly, To the miracle itself; which the following words declare to us: Christ being there, 'they bring unto him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech.' This was generally the course and custom of the people in all places where he came, to bring to him all diseased persons, and such as were possessed with evil spirits: so St. Matthew tells us, chap. iv. 24, 25, 'His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and Judea,

and from beyond Jordan.' They brought to him a paralytic, and many possessed with evil spirits, at Capernaum; they brought lepers and lunatics to him at Cesarea; and in all parts and places of his progress were brought to him the lame, and the blind, and the sick of all manner of maladies, to be healed by him. Here, in the text, they brought to him 'one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech;' by which is meant not barely a stammering speech, but one totally dumb or speechless; for so the word here, and in other places, is used to signify. The diseases, then, here to be cured were either a natural deafness and dumbness in one that was so born, or adventitious in one that was possessed with a deaf and dumb spirit; both which were incurable by any natural or ordinary means.

But what was it they besought our Saviour for him? Why, that the next words declare: 'They beseech him to put his hand upon him;' which they did, from the many examples they had seen and heard of his curing many distempered persons merely by a touch; so he cured Peter's wife's mother of a fever, only by touching her hand: he healed a leper in Galilee by a touch of his hand; with many others recorded in holy Scripture. Yea, we read of one that was healed by touching the hem of his garment; and of others who, by sending handkerchiefs and linen clothes, and receiving them back again touched by him, were healed of divers diseases, and the evil spirits went out of them. These things encouraged the people of Galilee to beseech him to put his hand upon this deaf and dumb man; upon which, as the following words declare, 'he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit and touched his tongue.'

So ready was he to do good upon the least motion, he needed no importunity, nor was he drawn to it by any earnest or frequent repetition of the suit, but readily answered the request, and cheerfully embraced the opportunity of shewing kindness; it was his meat and drink, his business and delight too, to do the will of God, and to do good offices unto men; it was his greatest pleasure, as one hath observed, to spread his healing wings over all, to dispense his benign influences and favours every where, and to make every one that came near him sensible of his good will to mankind. Though he was thronged after and pressed upon by the miserable and unfortunate, the diseased and possessed in all places where he came, yet we never find any person sent from his presence dissatisfied. It was but ask and have; and the bare saying, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' was enough to get the poor beggar's wants, of what kind soever, instantly supplied. So it was here, they did but ask him to put his hand upon this deaf and dumb person, and he immediately took him aside, to avoid all vanity and ostentation, and put his fingers into his ears, and touched his tongue. After which, 'looking up to heaven,' owning the paramount power of his

Father, and imploring his blessing, he looked down, and sighing at the infirmities of the poor man, said unto him, 'Ephphata,' that is, be opened; the sense whereof is, Let all impediments of hearing and speaking be gone from thee, and let the power of both come unto thee.

Well, and what was the issue of this kind and hearty word? Why, that the next verse will tell us: 'And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain,' ver. 35; that is, immediately upon Christ's pronouncing the word 'Ephphata,' his hearing and speaking came to him, and both in great perfection; his hearing was quick, and his speech was plain, and both by a touch and a word's speaking.

Nothing, you see, is hard or difficult to an Almighty power; it is but to 'speak the word, (saith the centurion to our Saviour,) and thy servant shall be whole.' Matt. viii. 8. 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' saith the leper in the gospel; upon which our Saviour spake the word, 'I will, be thou clean,' and 'immediately the leprosy departed from him.' Luke viii. 12, 13. What can be more lightly or easily done than by a touch or a word? and yet this is all by which these miraculous works were done. St. Mark tell us, that, in all manner of distempers, all that touched him were made whole, Mark vi. 56; and many were healed by his word only, without coming to him, or seeing of him. He that spake all things into being by a word of his mouth, can as easily restore them again by a word's speaking: so did he raise Lazarus, after he had lain three days in the grave, with saying only, 'Lazarus, come forth.' John xi. He brought to life the widow's son of the city of Nain, only by bidding the dead carcase arise. So did he Jairus's daughter, only by saying unto her, 'Talitha cumi, Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.' Mark v. 41, 42. And here, by the word 'Ephphata,' he rebuked a deaf and dumb spirit, and restored the hearing and speaking to one that was deprived of both. This is the miracle here related, together with what went before it. I proceed, in the

Last place, to what followed after it; and that was,—

1st, Our Saviour's charge, 'That they should tell no man of it, though the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.'

2dly, The effect that the miracle had upon them; 'They were beyond measure astonished.'

3dly, The confession it drew from them, 'saying, he hath done all things well, he maketh the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.' For the

1st, Our Saviour straitly charged them 'that they should tell no man of it,' ver. 36. He did not affect vain-glory, in exerting his miraculous power, nor did he court the applause or admiration of the world in any thing that he did; he was above all such

vanity, and used all possible ways and means to prevent it. Here he charged the deaf and dumb man whom he had cured, not to use his tongue in speaking of it to any; and those that saw it, not to publish or make words of it. When he cleansed a leper of his leprosy, at his coming down from the mount, he said unto him, 'See, thou tell no man, but go and shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.' Matt. viii. 2, 3, 4. And the same he frequently did upon other like occasions. Sometimes he withdrew out of crowds and throngs of people, to avoid their hosannas and acclamations. After his miracle of the loaves, the multitude came about him, and would have made him a king; but he took occasion from thence to divert their thoughts from earthly glories, and directs them to mind more heavenly matters, John vi. He never exercised his power for vain or worldly purposes, but only for the good of mankind, as their wants and necessities did require. The Jews, indeed, expected signs and shews in the heavens to raise admiration, some wonderful and prodigious appearances in the air and in the clouds, to draw the eyes of the world upon him; but he rather checked than gratified their vain curiosity. His miracles were all salutary and healing, tending to the benefit of men's bodies, and the saving of their souls; such good offices he did with all privacy, and without levity or ostentation, commanding those that received the benefit of them to conceal it, and to tell no man: but these great and good things could not be hid; like the sun they discover themselves, and break out of the cloud that covers them. Their breasts could not contain a secret so worthy to be known, neither could they forbear publishing what tended so much to the public good; for 'the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it.' Which will lead,—

2dly, To the effect the miracle had upon the minds of the people, which was wonder and astonishment, ver. 37; 'They were beyond measure astonished.' And that,—

1. For the stupendous greatness of his works, such as the healing all manner of diseases, making the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, cleansing the lepers, raising the dead, casting out evil spirits, and dispossessing legions of devils out of persons cruelly tormented by them. These are astonishing acts, such as none but a Divine Omnipotent Power could effect, and such as might well enough possess the spectators of them with wonder and amazement: considering,—

2. The wonderful manner of doing of them; for he effected these things as well absent as present, and that in an instant too, as well as by sensible degrees, by applying of his hand, by the touch of his garment, by the word of his mouth, by the motion of his will; to shew (as one hath observed) that any means would serve, that no means were necessary, and that all times and places were alike to the Sovereign Almighty Power of the Son of God; which could not but fill them with admiration and astonish-

ment. Considering farther the end and design of all his wonderful works, which was nothing but the good and welfare of mankind; he sought not his own glory, or the praise of men, but the health and happiness of all that came to him: his mighty works were so many miracles of mercy, which surprised the beholders, and excited wonder and astonishment in all that heard of them.

3dly, And this drew that confession from them in the close of this gospel, 'saying, he hath done all things well, he maketh the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak;' the last thing to be spoken to in it. Wonder and astonishment commonly break out into praises and thanksgivings; the breast cannot long contain such deep resentments, which often force their way out, and vent themselves in confessions and commendations. After the miracle of the loaves, it is said, the people were 'amazed,' and cried out, saying, 'Of a truth this is that prophet that was to come into the world,' John vi. 14: and others, upon the sight of his mighty works, said among themselves, 'Surely this is the Son of God.' And here, upon his healing the deaf and dumb man, they said, 'He hath done all things well;' that is, there is no fault or defect to be found in him, and nothing but the height of charity and goodness appear in all his actions, for 'he maketh the deaf to hear.' He put his finger into the ears of many that were troubled with deafness, and thereby removed all the impediments of sense, and their hearing came to them: and likewise 'the dumb to speak;' he loosened the tongues of many that were speechless and tongue-tied, and thereby their speech was restored unto them, and they spake plain.

Thus is the miracle of the text briefly opened and explained to you, together with what was previous, and what subsequent to it: it remains only to apply it, by inferring some useful lessons from it. And,—

1. From our Saviour's going about doing good, we may learn to imitate him, and to do likewise; not that we are to imitate him in doing miracles, or in that stupendous manner of benefiting mankind, as our Saviour did; these things are out of the reach of our power; but, as far as we may, to be helpful and serviceable to the good of one another. We cannot raise the dead, but we may help, comfort, and counsel the living: we cannot give sight to the blind, or feet to the lame, by any miraculous way of removing those infirmities; but we may be, in some sense, eyes to the blind, by instructing the ignorant, and feet to the lame, by helping them to walk in the ways of righteousness. It is not (as one hath well observed) the doing good just in the same instances, or after the same wonderful manner that this example directs us to, but only to a like willingness and readiness to do good upon all fit occasions, as far as our power and activity will reach. It obliges us in our several stations, as much as in us lies, to promote the welfare and prosperity, the ease and happiness of our neighbours; and, as opportunity offers, to do good unto all men. We

are, according to our abilities, to better the state of their bodies and minds, that others may bless God for our imparting those blessings unto them, which he hath more liberally bestowed upon us.

2. The miracle in the text, as well as the rest recorded in holy Scripture, may serve to confirm us in the belief of Christ's doctrine, that he was the true promised Messias, the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. So we find Nicodemus confessing, 'I know, (saith he,) that thou art a teacher come from God; for none could do the works that thou dost, except God were with him.' John iii. 2. He spake as no man spake, and did the works which no man ever did or could do; for which many believed on him. That the Messias, or Saviour of the world, was to do miracles when he came, is evident from that prophecy of Isaias, chap. xxxv. ver. 4, 5, 6. 'Be strong (saith he) and fear not, behold your God shall come and save you: then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.' All which things were punctually fulfilled and done by our blessed Saviour, who made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak. Hence we find him often urging the testimony of his miracles for the truth of his Messiahship. When St. John sent some of his disciples to him, with this question, 'Art thou he that should come, or must we look for another?' His answer was an appeal to his miracles, 'Go, tell John (saith he) those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them; and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.' Matt. xi. 4, 5, 6. Miracles are the seal of a divine commission, as being the effects of a Divine power; and he that brings this to attest his doctrine, may be well enough supposed to come from God: and therefore we find our Saviour thus reasoning with the Jews, 'If I do not the works of my Father;' that is, such as manifest a Divine power, and a commission from heaven, 'believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.' John x. 37, 38. So that, from this evidence, we may safely take him for our Saviour, and repose our whole trust and confidence in him.

3. From Christ's looking up to heaven before he did the miracle, as was before observed, we learn to begin all our works with prayer, and to implore the Divine blessing in all our enterprises. This we, who have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, have far more need and reason to do, than he who had all power given him both in heaven and earth; and if the Son of God, in his fulness of power, craved the aid of his heavenly Father, how much more ought we, in our state of impotence and inability, to look up to him for assistance in all our undertakings? To this we are directed in Phil. iv. 6, 'In every thing by prayer and sup-

plication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

Lastly, From the solemn acknowledgment here made of Christ's power and goodness, in curing this deaf and dumb man, saying, 'He hath done all things well, he maketh the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak;' let us learn to own the hand of God in all his merciful and wonderful works, ascribing nothing to ourselves, but all to his power and glory. This lesson we are taught not only here, but throughout the whole book of Scripture. The Psalmist especially calls upon us to magnify and extol the works of the Lord, and in all conditions and necessities to have our whole trust and dependance upon him; and thus, by beginning all our works with prayer, and ending them with praise, we shall find the comfort and reward of both. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GAL. iii. 16, and following verses.—*To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not unto seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ; and this I say*, &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to pray unto God for grace, that we may so faithfully serve him in this life, that we fail not finally to attain his heavenly promises. The promises here meant are those of justification and salvation by faith in Christ, whereby all mankind, who, by the sin of our first parents, were doomed to temporal and eternal death, are, by the merits of a Saviour, happily restored to a spiritual and everlasting life. These St. Peter styles 'exceeding great and precious promises,' as proceeding from the rich inexhaustible treasure of divine goodness, 1 Pet. i. 4. And of these St. Paul here treats in the epistle for this day, which begins with the sixteenth verse of this chapter, 'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made,' and so on to the twenty-third, in which we are taught,—

First, To whom these promises were made, and when.

Secondly, That the law, which was given after, did not vacate or disannul them.

Thirdly, To what end or use the law served, and how it was given.

Fourthly, The consistency of the law with these promises, and the conclusion of the whole. Of which particularly: And,—

First, Of the persons to whom these promises were made, and that the first words of the epistle tell us, 'It was to Abraham and his seed.' Now this promise was made to Abraham long before the giving of the law by Moses; of which we read, Gen. xii. 3, 'In thee,' that is, in thy seed, 'shall all the families of the earth be blessed. He saith not of seeds, as of many,' saith the apostle; for

Abraham's children by the bondwoman, viz., Ishmael and his issue, were not included in the promise; but in the singular number, 'as of one;' that is, Isaac, born of Sarah the freewoman, who was a type of Christ, that descended from him: and therefore it is added, 'and to thy seed, which is Christ.' This is more fully expressed, chap. iv. ver. 22, &c.; where we read, that Abraham 'had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman;' the one denoting the law, and the other the gospel. 'He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh,' and so subject to the carnal ordinances and observances of Moses's law; 'but he of the freewoman was by promise,' and so free from those Mosaical rites, and are justified not with, but without them. After which he applies this to the Christians, saying, ver. 28, 'Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise;' that is, entitled to the grace of the gospel, and seek not justification by the works of the law; for 'we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free,' ver. 31. The sense of all which is, that the promise of God's blessing all the nations of the earth, both Gentiles as well as Jews, was made to Abraham and his seed: not to the spurious brood of Hagar the handmaid, who continued under circumcision, and were debtors to the whole law; but to the lawful issue of Sarah his wife, who, by an extraordinary blessing of heaven, conceived and brought forth her only son Isaac, who was to be the instrument of conveying down these great blessings to the world. The descendants from him are those Israelites mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. ix. 'To whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever,' ver. 4, 5. These great privileges belonged to them, as they were the offspring of Abraham, to whom Christ was primarily and principally promised and sent.

But did the promise of these great blessings belong to all that descended from the loins of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? No, saith the apostle, 'For they are not all Israel that are of Israel, neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children; but in Isaac shall thy seed be called:' meaning, that they shall be reckoned the seed of Abraham who are born after the manner of Isaac's birth, that is, by the word or promise of God; for 'they which are the children of the flesh (saith he) these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.' ver. 6, 7, 8. The sense whereof is, that the promise made to Abraham and his seed, was not made to his carnal, but his spiritual seed, to believers begotten after the image of his faith, and born by the word of God, as was Isaac.

Now Abraham's faith is described to us in sundry places of Scripture: Abraham 'believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' Rom. iv. 3; Gal. iii. 6. 'He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in

faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was also able to perform.' Again, the same apostle affirms, that 'he was not weak in faith, but against hope believed in hope, that he might be the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, so shall thy seed be.' Rom. iv. 18, &c. Moreover, the author to the Hebrews tells us, that by faith Abraham left his own country, obeying God's call, not knowing whither he went; by faith he trusted in God's promise that he should have a son, though he was old, and Sarah past age for the natural course of conception. By faith he offered up his only son Isaac, the son of his love and of his hope, that he should be comforted, and all nations blessed in him; still believing that of him, though as good as dead, should spring as many as the stars in the sky for multitude, and as the sand on the sea-shore innumerable: judging him faithful that had promised these things, and counting that God was able to raise up Isaac again from the dead, to accomplish his purpose; from whence he received him in a figure. Heb. xi. 8—20.

These are some of the many noble acts of Abraham's faith, so often recorded, and so much celebrated in holy Scripture; all which were counted to him for righteousness, that is, they justified him before God, and procured acceptance with him.

Now they that tread in the steps of his faith, and imitate his steadfast belief of the promises, they are the spiritual seed of Abraham, to whom these promises of justification and salvation were made; in respect of these it is, that he is called 'the father of the faithful,' and 'the father of them that believe.' Rom. iv. 16. They that attain to this faith, are the children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise: and these will obtain the same privilege with their father Abraham, to have their faith counted to them for righteousness; that is, their sins shall not be imputed to them, but their persons shall be accepted, and counted righteous before God, which are the greatest blessings that can be bestowed on any people: which yet are not absolute, but conditional, being founded on the condition of faith in Christ, and firm reliance upon his merits.

This then is the promise, which contains in it the pardon of sin, and the acceptation of our persons as righteous; and these are the persons to whom it is made, even the seed of Abraham, that adhere to the promise as he did, and walk in the steps of his faith.

But did not the law, after given by Moses, any ways alter or abrogate the promise made to Abraham, and bring in new terms of justification by the works of that law? No, in no wise: so the apostle in the next verse of our text solemnly declares. 'This I say (saith he) that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law that was four hundred and thirty years after could not disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect:' meaning, that the covenant of blessing all nations in

Abraham, and the promise of mercy made to his seed in the Messiah, were long before confirmed by God to them, and made an everlasting covenant, that should not be broken. And it cannot reasonably be imagined, that the law delivered by Moses 430 years after the ratification of that covenant, should frustrate or invalidate that covenant made with Abraham, and in him with all believers so long before; or that the goodness of God would permit him to impose harder, and indeed impossible terms of justification, by the observation of the law, when in his promise to Abraham and his seed he had granted it long before upon the milder and better terms of faith in Christ: which would be not only to alter, but to destroy the promise of God, and make it of no effect. This he farther argues in the following verse: 'For if the inheritance (saith he) be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise;' that is, the asserting of justification by the works of the law, will quite alter the method of God's dealing with Abraham, and of his proceedings with all his posterity. For if the blessing foretold to come upon all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, come upon the performance of the Mosaical law, then there is an end of the promise made to Abraham, and nothing can come to him or his seed by virtue of that, which is directly contrary to the whole tenor of Scripture, for that affirms it to come to Abraham and his posterity by promise only. Beside,

The ascribing of justification to the works of the law, will attribute our justification to ourselves, and our own performance, and wholly derogate from the honour and efficacy of Christ's satisfaction: for if our keeping the law be the terms of our acceptance with God, we are then our own justifiers and saviours, and there can be no need of another's righteousness, if our own will serve the turn. Moreover,—

This will advance the notion of merit, and beat down the price of the mercy and merits of a Redeemer: for if our works are sufficient to justification, then may they deserve and claim it at God's hand, and we need look no farther, or be beholden to any other. It is upon this foot that St. Paul so strongly argues against justification by works, in his epistle to the Romans and elsewhere; telling us, that they who raise the structure of their hopes upon the foundation of their legal performances, and trust too much to themselves, have whereon to boast: like the proud Pharisees, who counted upon a generous kind of happiness to be achieved by the merit of their own works, and scorned a borrowed and beggarly felicity, that came like an alms from the bounty of heaven. Which pride and arrogance of the Pharisees is sharply rebuked by our Saviour, who told them that 'Publicans and harlots shall enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.'

Now, to 'him that worketh (saith St. Paul) is the reward reckoned not of grace, but of debt,' Rom. iv. 4; that is, he that looks to be justified by his own works, receives the blessing not

as from the grace and favour of God, but as a debt due to his own merits; which vanity he blames in some of the Israelites, who 'being ignorant of Christ's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, submitted not to the righteousness of God.' Rom. x. 3. And this deprived them of all the comfort and benefit of it; and therefore we are all taught to say, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saveth us.' By all which it appears, that the blessings of justification and salvation which we expect, must come from the promise made to Abraham and his seed, and not from the law, which was after given by Moses.

But if matters be thus, 'Wherefore, then, serveth the law?' as the apostle asks the question, in the next verse of our text; to which the answer is in the following words: 'It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made.' Where its being added 'because of transgressions,' signifies its being given both to discover and prevent sin, which is the transgression of the law: 'By the law (saith the apostle) cometh the knowledge of sin, for I had not known lust, if the law had not said, Thou shalt not covet.' And as it was given to discover, so was it added to prevent sin, and to restrain men from it, by shewing them the guilt and punishment of it, and making them to seek out for a remedy; which could only be by this promised seed: and therefore they were to read and study and live by that law; till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; that is, till Christ and his members, his disciples and believers, should come to give them clearer and fuller directions. So that the law was given them as a rule to walk by, and to govern their actions, though it could not be the means or instrument of their justification, which could only be done by faith in Christ. In the mean time, the principal use and design of the law was to keep them from sin, and to affright them from all transgressions and violations of it; to which end, 'it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator;' that is, it was delivered by them in a most solemn and glorious manner, with thunder and lightning, and the sound of a trumpet, and with all the pompous solemnities of dread and terror, to keep them to the observance of it. Yea, so terrible was the appearance, that the people durst not approach the mountain; and therefore Moses was called up to be a mediator, to shew them the word of the Lord, and by his hand to deliver it to them. Now, this mediator was not to God only, but between God and the people; for a 'mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.'

When the apostle had given this account of the use and reason of the law, he proceeds, in the next verse, to another question, which they might be apt to move in this case; and that is, 'Is the law, then, against the promises of God?' Since the promise made to Abraham is so full of comfort, and the law given by

Moses so full of terror, is there any clashing or opposition between them?

This question he answers with an *absit;* No, 'God forbid! for if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law,' ver. 21; that is, had the law any power of absolving us from our guilt, and granting to us life and salvation, indeed then righteousness might have been by the law; then might the promise made to Abraham have been superseded as void and useless, having a later remedy of being justified and pronounced righteous by the law.

But, alas! the case is quite otherwise: for neither hath the law any such power of acquitting and granting life; nor if it had, have we any power of performing the conditions requisite to the receiving the benefit of it; and so must remain for ever in a helpless and undone condition, if not relieved by the promise made to Abraham and his seed, and by the merits of the Messiah who issued from him. This is evident from

The last words of our text; for 'the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.' The Scripture tells us, that no mere man ever did or could keep the whole law; for 'in many things we offend all;' and 'if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' The law exacts from us perfect and unsinning obedience, which is not in our power to pay; and pronounces a curse upon every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them. So that by this we are all shut up under sin, and sentenced to eternal death, the just wages and punishment of it. This the Scriptures have revealed to us, that we may have recourse to a Saviour, and that the promise by faith in Christ might be given to them that believe.

This is the sense and sum of the epistle for this day; from whence we may infer a few weighty and useful lessons; as,—

1. We may learn hence to magnify the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God, in providing this remedy for us in the promised seed: we were all lost in Adam, but are happily restored in Abraham; the sin of the one being done away by the righteousness of the other. This was the blessed contrivance of Heaven for the restoration of mankind, who had neither knowledge nor ability to help themselves: in this forlorn condition our gracious God took pity upon us, and found out this expedient to relieve us in our lowest state, and thereby distinguished us in his favour above the noblest rank of creatures; for though the angels first fell from their station of glory, and after drew us into the same misery with themselves, yet the Son of God was pleased to pass by them, and to restore us; for he took not on him the nature of angels, but took on him the seed of Abraham; which is an instance of the Divine goodness, ever to be owned and admired by the sons of men.

2. We learn hence the right way and method of our justification, which is not by the works of the law, by which no flesh living can be justified, but by faith in Christ. The law speaks nothing but death and damnation; and as many as are under the law, are under the curse. It is the grace and spirit of the gospel which alone speaks life and salvation; it is that helps us to the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons as righteous before God. We all stand condemned by the sentence of the law, which the best of us daily break in thought, word, and deed; so that we can expect no favour thence, and it would be arrogance and folly to build the hopes of salvation upon so bad a foundation. To find mercy, we must have recourse to the promise made to us in Abraham, and look for a blessing from the promised seed: and, to obtain justification, we must appeal from the rigour and curse of the law, to the mercy and favour of the gospel, to rely upon the atonement revealed in it as purchased by Christ, and bestowed on them that believe.

Lastly, Let us learn from hence to qualify ourselves for this blessing, and that is by faith in Christ; for the promise is made and given only to them that believe. It is not the bare descent from Abraham that will entitle to it; for St. John bid the Jews not to think it sufficient to say, 'We have Abraham to our father, for God was able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' Matt. iii. 9. And our Saviour tells them, that 'calling Abraham their father' would be of no use to them, without 'doing the works and following the faith of Abraham.' John viii. No external privileges can do them any service, without internal grace in the heart; for 'neither circumcision or uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature.' Wherefore let us pray and labour for a firm and steadfast faith in Christ; and that not a dead, idle, and ineffectual faith, but a faith that is lively and operative, and is accompanied with good works; for a dead faith will never bring us to life, nor obtain the promise of salvation for us.

DISCOURSE CCXXVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE x. 23—38. — *Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see; for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things that ye hear, and have not heard them. And behold a certain lawyer stood up*, &c.

THE epistle for the day spake of Christ in the promise made to Abraham and his seed, long before his coming; of which before.

The gospel speaks of him as actually come, shewing himself to his disciples, and delivering to them the words of eternal life; and thence declares the much greater blessedness of those that

saw him in the flesh, than they that only beheld him in the promise; as it is a far greater comfort to see a friend, than barely to hear of him. Which made him 'turn to his disciples, and say privately to them, Blessed are the eyes that see the things that ye see,' &c.; meaning, that their eyes were blessed with the sight of the most glorious object, in seeing their Saviour, that they were capable of beholding. A sight that made good old Simeon desire to see nothing more after he had seen that, as knowing that the world could not afford such another prospect: 'Now (saith he) let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel.' Luke ii. 29, 30, &c.

St. John tells us, that he and many others were blessed with that happy sight, John i. 14: 'The Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth.' And elsewhere, 'That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked on, and our hands have handled of the word of life, that declare we unto you; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life that was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' 1 John i. 1, 2.

Now here the eyes are pronounced blessed, that thus saw him in the flesh; and that 'because many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them.' The prophets and kings here mentioned were Abraham, Moses, with other succeeding prophets and princes, who in all the messages they delivered concerning the Messias had longing desires to see him, and likewise to hear the doctrine to be revealed by him. And yet none of them ever had the happiness of either; for though God discovered himself to some of them, and employed them in revealing his will to others, yet the revelations now made to you, are infinitely beyond any that were afforded to men before. Abraham, indeed, is said to see Christ's day, but that was through a glass darkly; he saw him afar off in the promise and the prophecy, but ye saw him face to face. And thence he proceeds to bless the eyes that saw his person, and the ears that heard his doctrine; both which were favours and privileges never vouchsafed to any kings or prophets before.

Upon Christ's speaking these things to his disciples, 'Behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Which question proceeded not from any sincere desire of knowing or doing his duty, but from an insidious design of entrapping or entangling of him: to defeat which, our Saviour so orders the matter, as to make him answer his own question; for referring him to the law, he asks, 'What is written there? and how readest thou?' He, answering, said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and

with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.' Whereupon Christ told him, that 'he had answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.' Where our Saviour comprises the whole law in two words, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,' &c., 'and thy neighbour as thyself;' and promises eternal life upon the doing of them. In treating of which, it will be requisite to shew,—

First, The nature and properties of 'love.'

Secondly, The double object of it, viz., 'God and our neighbour.'

Thirdly, The manner and measure of both; the one is to be loved 'with all the heart,' &c., the other is to be loved 'as ourselves.' And,—

Lastly, The reward of so doing, which is eternal life: 'This do, and thou shalt live.'

First, For the nature of love, it may be thus described: It is a passion of the soul that inclines it to unite to the thing beloved. I style it a passion of the soul, to shew that it is seated within, not in the lip or the tongue, but in the heart; and thence shews itself in deed and in truth. And it is a passion that inclines to unite itself to something that is pleasing to it; for all true love, you know, covets the nearest and closest union with what it is set upon. The properties of it are chiefly these two; a desire to please, and a desire to enjoy.

He that truly loves any person, will endeavour to approve himself to him, to do all things that may be grateful and well-pleasing to him, and likewise to avoid all that may any ways offend or displease him. The most difficult service will be easy to a true lover, and the most grateful things will be forborne when they may prove offensive.

Again, true love desires to enjoy; it delights in the presence, and grows impatient of the absence of what it is fixed upon. The love of a friend will make us desire his conversation, to wish for his company, and to be pleased with the enjoying it. This is briefly the nature, and these are the properties of love, and by these fruits you may know the truth and reality of it; which you may therefore try by this touchstone.

Secondly, As for the object of love, it is double; viz., God, and our neighbour.

The first and great object of our love is God: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' He is 'the Lord,' and so his power and sovereignty may command our affections. He is 'our God,' in covenant and relation to us; and so his kindness and nearness to us may engage us to love him. The two strongest motives of love are infinite greatness and infinite goodness, both which centre in God, and in none beside him.

As for the infinite greatness and excellency of his person, that is far above all that we can express or conceive, for he is the sum and source of all perfections: all imaginable excellencies are

originally in him; and whatever is excellent in any of his creatures, is entirely derived from him. And what nobler object can we have for our love, than He who is the author and fountain of all perfections!

But beside the transcendent greatness of his person, the infinite goodness and bounty of his nature may justly command our affection: 'He is good, (saith the Psalmist,) and doth good.' He is infinitely good in himself, and he is unspeakably so to all his creatures; for he daily watches over us for good, and is still protecting us from all evil; he provides for our bodies, and preserves our souls: in a word, he freely gives us all things that are necessary both for life and godliness. And what great reason have we to love so amiable an object, and to give ourselves to Him, who so freely gives us all things? But our Saviour mentions here,—

2dly, Another object of our love; and that is, our 'neighbour;' for it is said not only that thou shalt love the Lord thy God, but likewise that 'thou shalt love thy neighbour.' And this we are commanded to do,—

(1.) And chiefly for God's sake, whose creature, child, and servant he is. Thy neighbour hath the image of God stamped upon him; his body is wonderfully made and framed by him in all its parts, his soul is immortal like himself; he is allied to the Father of spirits, and akin to the holy angels; which made St. John say, 'He that loveth God, must and will love his brother also.' 1 John iv. 20, 21. Again,—

(2.) Thy neighbour is to be loved for his own sake, because he hath the same nature with thyself; his body is made of the same mould, his soul came out of the same hands, and is endowed with the same noble and excellent faculties: 'In this (saith Solomon) the poor and the rich meet together, that God is the Maker of them all.' Prov. xxii. 2.

Lastly, Our neighbour is to be loved for our own sake, because he is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, being the same substance multiplied and enlarged into more persons: so that to be cruel to him, is in effect to be cruel to ourselves; and to be kind to him, is indeed to cherish our own flesh. In a word, if likeness be any cause or motive of love, we are to love our neighbour for God's, for his, and for our own sake; he being in likeness of nature allied and related to them all. And this love is to be expressed, partly by avoiding all things that are any way hurtful or displeasing to him, in body, goods, or name; and partly by doing all good offices, that may be helpful or beneficial to him in all or either of them. This is, in short, the double object of our love.

But, Thirdly, how or in what measure are these two to be loved by us? Why, that our Saviour here tells us: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind;' that is, with

the highest and most superlative affection. And likewise, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;' that is, with the like affection that thou bearest to thyself.

For the 1st, The loving of God with all the heart and all the soul, &c., denotes both the sincerity and integrity of our love to him.

The sincerity is signified by its being from the heart, not from the teeth or the tongue outward, but from the heart, soul, and spirit; and what springs from thence is commonly sound and sincere: and therefore we find God calling for it, 'My son, give me thine heart.' It is not for the ear only to listen to him, nor for the tongue to talk of him; but for the heart to receive and embrace him. All true love of God is rooted there, and all the acts of it must proceed from thence: it must be with the heart, soul, and mind, that is, with the understanding, will, and affections; which are all to be devoted to him, and inwardly touched and inflamed with the love of him.

And as the heart, soul, and mind denote the sincerity, so with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, denotes the integrity of our love to him; that is, he must have all, and will admit of no rival with him in our affections; for though he loves a broken, yet he hates a divided heart: he will have all or none, and therefore calls for the whole bent of our will, the whole stress of our soul, the whole sway of our understanding, together with all the might of our bodily powers, to be engaged and employed in his service. In a word, our love to God must be ardent and intense to the highest degree; it must be whole and entire, as much as possible, and above all things else, which is to love with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength.

But if God must have all, how then can our neighbour have any share, whom we are here likewise required to love? Very well, for these are consistent one with the other: the love of God doth not exclude the love of our neighbour, but comprise and include it under it; for we love God in loving our neighbour, which is done by his permission and command. Indeed, to love any thing in comparison or competition with him, and much more in opposition or contradiction to him, is a high breach of order and obedience to him: in this sense we are bid 'to hate father and mother,' and all that is dear to us, when they would draw us from him; and 'if any thus love the world,' or any thing in it, 'the love of the Father is not in him.' But to love our neighbour in submission and subordination to our Maker, is suitable to his will, and a duty laid upon us by his command. And this will lead me,—

2dly, To the manner and measure of loving our neighbour, which is, 'as ourselves;' that is, with a like, though not always with an equal affection; for every one being nearest to himself, may be allowed, first, to consult his own welfare. Charity, we say, begins at home, though it must not end there, but must

extend to all that are round about us, making our own desires the measure and standard of our dealing with others; doing all that good to others, which we would have done to us, and avoiding all that evil to any, which ourselves would be unwilling to bear. Which is, in short, to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.'

Thus we see the nature of love, the double object of it, God and our neighbour, together with the manner and measure of loving both. The performing of these, is by our Saviour here made the condition of eternal life; saying to the lawyer, 'This do, and thou shalt live;' meaning, that the doing hereof would certainly bring him to life and salvation, but the neglect of them would as surely deprive him of all well-grounded hopes of either. But it follows in the gospel,—

The lawyer, 'willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?' that is, he, thinking or pretending to have done all these things, moves another captious question, 'And who is my neighbour?' more for cavil than satisfaction. But our Saviour, knowing the wickedness of his heart, and the great uncharitableness that lodged there, answered him by a parable, saying, 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, that stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and likewise a Levite, who both saw him, and passed away on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him: and on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two-pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour to him that fell among the thieves? He said, He that shewed mercy unto him: then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.'

The design of which parable, was to instil into him the great lesson of universal charity and compassion to all men, not excepting our greatest enemies: for though the priest and Levite, who were fellow-Jews and countrymen to the wounded traveller, were so hard-hearted as to shew him no mercy; yet a Samaritan, who was of a different nation and religion, and between whom and the Jews there was a great enmity, was more compassionate towards him, washing his wounds, and applying healing things to him, and at his own charge taking care of him: by which example, he taught him and us to love our enemies, and to do good to them that spitefully use us, and persecute us. Moreover, our Saviour's intimating, that every one that is in want and stands in need of relief, although he be to us as a Jew to a Samaritan,

is yet to be looked upon as a neighbour, and to be the object of our mercy and pity. And the lawyer acknowledging that he that shewed mercy best shewed himself a neighbour to him, our Saviour took the advantage of his confession, and bid him remember and imitate the example, and go and do likewise.

This is the substance of the gospel for this day, from whence we may learn some weighty and important lessons: as,—

1. From Christ's pronouncing the eyes blessed, that saw the things which they saw, we may learn to bless God for the clear revelations he hath made and given to us; that he hath not left us to grope in the dark, as he did the heathens, nor to creep on by a weak and glimmering light, as he did the fathers of old, before Christ's coming; but hath given us the meridian light of the gospel, which hath shined out to us ever since the rising of this Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings: which made our Saviour thank his Father, that 'he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes.' Matt. xi. 35. 'The mysteries that were hid from former ages, are now made known unto us.' Eph. iii. 3. And though we had not the honour of seeing our Saviour with our bodily eyes, as the apostles had, yet Christ hath pronounced those blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.

2. From Christ's prescribing the love of God and our neighbour, as necessary to eternal life; let us carefully learn and practise both, and that in the different measures and degrees here prescribed: as,—

(1.) Let us love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind; that is, with all the powers and faculties of soul and body, and with the highest and most intense degrees of all of them, which are all his, and by the greatest right due to him. This will keep us hearty and constant to our duty to him, making us to delight in his worship and service, and ever ready to run the paths of his commandments; yea, this will put us upon the most difficult and costly duties to please and approve ourselves to him, and to forsake all, even friends, goods, and life itself, rather than forsake Him, who is better than all these. And when we can say with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee;' then do we truly demonstrate our love to him, and are qualified for the highest act of it, even to enjoy him for ever.

(2.) Let us love our neighbour as ourselves; that is, with the same kind of love, though not always to the same degree: so the particle *as* is often used in Scripture, where we are bid to be holy, *as* he that hath called us is holy, and to be merciful, *as* our heavenly Father is merciful; which can be understood only of a similitude, but not of an equality, for we can never arrive to the unimitable pitch of his holiness or bounty: so to love our neighbour *as* ourself, is to love him with a like, though not equal

affection. And this love consists in making one another's condition our own, and so commiserating and doing to others what we ourselves would desire in their case. Let us therefore in all our intercourse put ourselves in one another's room, and then consider what usage we should expect in their circumstances, and make that the rule and standard of our dealings with them. But here we must note, that it is only a regular love, and such lawful desires as we may have for ourselves, that is to be the measure of our loving others; for inordinate wishes and desires for ourselves, such as the having our lust, pride, or revenge gratified, will not warrant our doing or complying with such things in another. It is the lawful, honest, and orderly love of ourselves that is to be the standard of our loving others, and that will conduce in a great measure to the peace, happiness, and welfare of mankind.

Lastly, Since the loving of God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, are here made the conditions of eternal life, let us not vainly hope or presume upon it without them. Love is the principal act of our spiritual life here, and can alone bring us to eternal life hereafter; it is indeed the best qualification for the regions above, where is the seat of love, and nothing but amity and concord reign: nor could any be happy there, in living for ever with those he cannot love.

Wherefore to conclude, if ever we hope to attain to life and salvation, let us get our hearts inflamed with the love of God and our neighbour, which is the best preparative for the heavenly mansions; to which God of his mercy bring us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE CCXXVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GAL. v. 16.—*I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.*

THE collect for this day directs us to pray for the increase of faith, hope, and charity, the three great virtues and ornaments of a Christian's life; which, by inclining them to love what God commands, will entitle them to all that he hath promised.

Now these excellent graces of God's Holy Spirit being mainly, if not only opposed by the works of the flesh; the epistle sets forth both the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit; to the intent that we may eschew the one, and embrace the other: beginning with the words of our text, 'Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary one to the other.' So that the great work and business of the christian life is a spiritual conflict or warfare between the flesh and the Spirit; he that 'walks in the Spirit, will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;' and he that 'walks after the

flesh, will not fulfil the fruits of the Spirit:' for 'these are contrary one to the other.' To describe the nature and end of this combat, I must, as our text directs, shew,

First, What it is to 'walk in the Spirit.'

Secondly, What is meant by 'fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.' And,

Thirdly, Shew the victory we may gain by the one over the other.

First, then, What is it to 'walk in the Spirit?' Why, in short, it is to be guided by the influence of God's Holy Spirit, by hearkening to the good motions it secretly suggests to us within, and by obeying the good instructions it openly instils to us without; for both these ways the Holy Spirit of God works upon us: it is a voice inwardly whispering to us, 'This is the way, walk in it, when we are turning to the right hand, or to the left:' it is a voice outwardly crying to us, like that in the wilderness, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' But to know the better what it is to walk in or after the Spirit, we must have recourse to the 22d and 23d verses of this chapter; where the fruits of the Spirit are described to be these.

'Love,' which includes the love of God and our neighbour.

'Joy,' which implies a complacence and delight in both.

'Peace,' which relates to God and man; and what results from both, a peace with our own conscience.

'Long suffering,' which imports a patient bearing of injuries.

'Gentleness,' which consists in an easiness to be entreated.

'Goodness,' which is a readiness to all good works.

'Faith,' which is a firm persuasion of the truth of God's word and promises.

'Meekness,' which is a freedom from all inordinate passions.

'Temperance,' which is a moderate use of all God's creatures.

Against these, the Apostle adds, there is no law; that is, there is none to prohibit or punish, but there are many to require and reward them.

These are the blessed fruits of God's Holy Spirit, and they that live in the practice of them, are truly said 'to walk in the Spirit.' But,

Secondly, What is it to walk after the flesh, and to fulfil the lusts of it? Why, that in brief is, to follow too much the corrupt desires and devices of our own heart, and to be carried away by the sway of a carnal and sensual appetite. And this will lead us to consider the works of the flesh, which are likewise described in the 19th and 20th verses of this chapter. And they are these:

'Adultery,' which is the incontinence of married persons, or breaking the bands of wedlock.

'Fornication,' which is the incontinence of single persons; whereby they make the members of Christ the members of a harlot.

'Uncleanness,' which is the impurity of the mind, together with the obscene rites that were paid to the idol gods.

'Lasciviousness,' which implies all wantonness of behaviour, expressed by the lewdness of words or actions.

'Idolatry,' which is the multiplying of deities, or giving that worship to false gods, that is due only to the true.

'Witchcraft,' which is the contracting with evil spirits, or the having recourse to them.

'Hatred,' which is the bearing an evil mind towards any.

'Variance,' which is the raising different parties and opinions.

'Emulations,' which are a vain affectation of glory and pre-eminence.

'Wrath,' which is an excessive or inordinate degree of anger.

'Strife,' which is a desire of, or delight in contention.

'Seditions,' which are mutinies or insurrections in the state.

'Heresies,' which are schisms and divisions in the Church.

'Envyings,' which are the swellings and sicknesses of the mind, arising and occasioned by both.

'Murders,' which are a wilful and malicious shedding of blood.

'Drunkenness, revellings, and such like,' which are an inordinate use or abuse of God's creatures. Of all which the apostle solemnly declares, that 'they which do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.'

These are, in short, the works of the flesh; and they that live and delight in them, are said to 'walk after the flesh,' and to 'fulfil the lusts of it.'

Thus we have a brief account both of the 'fruits of the Spirit,' and of the 'works of the flesh;' and likewise what it is to walk in the one, and to fulfil the lusts of the other: by which we may see the true sense and meaning of our text, 'I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh;' that is, if we give up ourselves to the guidance and blessing of God's Holy Spirit, and labour to bring forth the fruits thereof, we shall be enabled to conquer all the reluctance of the carnal appetite, and subdue the opposition arising from all the sinful lusts of the flesh.

But before I speak to the victory we have or may have by the graces of the Spirit over the works of the flesh, it will be requisite to observe the struggle and combat that is found between them. This is held forth in the next words to the text: 'for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would:' meaning, that the flesh strongly inclines and enticeth to evil; the Spirit, on the other hand, seeks to draw us from it, and powerfully excites to that which is good: both these are striving for the mastery within us, and, like the twins in Rebecca's womb, struggle to overcome and supplant each other. This the Gentile philosophers found, who took notice of 'two main principles' that governed the actions of mankind; the one they called the 'principle of good,' the other the 'principle of evil;' and these two maintain a continual contest and enmity

with one another. 'The principle of goodness,' which is no other than the Spirit of God working in us, minds and moves us only to things pleasing to God, and agreeable to his will. 'The principle of evil,' which is no other than the fleshly or carnal appetite, inclines us only to what is suggested by Satan, and suited to that evil spirit. And as there is a perpetual enmity between these two principles, that which is of God constantly opposing and warring against whatsoever cometh from the devil; so the apostle tells us of the 'flesh and the Spirit,' that 'these two are contrary one to the other.' Others of the ancients have expressed this by a 'good' and an 'evil genius,' which they make the constant attendants upon every person,—the one prompting to virtue and goodness, the other to all manner of vice and wickedness; these two contrary principles occasion all that difference of action, and all that struggle that is found in the world between good and evil.

The first rise hereof was from the apostasy of our first parents, who by the fall crazed all their faculties, and brought confusion and disorder upon the whole man; before that, all things were well and quiet within us; reason being placed on the throne, and all the inferior faculties subjected to its rule and governance, which they all readily and carefully obeyed. We came out of God's hand 'very good,' having his image stamped upon us, which consisted in 'knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;' which made Solomon declare, that 'God made man upright;' but the first transgression brought a crookedness and perverseness into our nature, which hath broken the order and harmony of all our faculties. Hence it comes to pass, that the inferior powers of the soul rise up, and sometimes overrule the superior, the the carnal appetite rebelling against reason, and the flesh lusting against the Spirit: 'these two are contrary one to the other;' God Almighty having put an enmity between what is born of him, and the seed of the serpent. And as he divided between the night and the day, and put an irreconcilable opposition between light and darkness; so hath he put a perpetual enmity between the bright beams of the divine Spirit, and the filthy steams of fleshly lusts: the one leading us to God and all that is good, the other leading us to Satan, the world, and all manner of evil. These two contrary principles, by the unhappiness of our birth, are still struggling in our breasts; for which reason a Christian's life is often styled a 'warfare,' and we the 'soldiers of Jesus Christ,' being listed under his banner, and fighting against those 'fleshly lusts that war against the soul.'

This conflict we find St. Paul at large describing in his own person in the 7th chapter to the Romans, where he sets forth the difficulties he encountered, the assistance he had from the Holy Spirit, and likewise the ground that sin and Satan sometimes got over him in it. 'I know, (saith he, ver. 18,) that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for though to

will is present with me, yet how to perform that which is good I find not:' that is, his flesh lusted against the Spirit, and though by the light of the Spirit he knew and approved of what was good, yea, and many times willed and desired it too, yet the flesh was sometimes too hard for him, and overbore all his resolutions: insomuch, (as he goes on,) 'the good that I would, I do not, but the evil I would not, that I do.' He consented to what was good, and yet omitted it; and he disliked evil, and yet practised it; being vanquished by the fleshly part, and carried away by the stream of a sensual appetite: which, in the next verse, he styles, 'the sin that dwelled in him. I find then a law, (saith he, ver. 21, &c.) that when I would do good, evil is present with me.' His desires towards good were sometimes checked and overruled by his inclinations to evil; for albeit that he 'delighted in the law of God after the inward man,' his superior faculties convincing him of the truth, and causing in him some delight in what God's law required; yet he felt 'another law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin, which was in his members:' meaning, that by the importunity and solicitations of the flesh, he was carried away to act against the dictates of his own mind; which made him cry out in the following verse, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' By this instance we plainly see the words of our text verified, that 'the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' The truth hereof we all find and feel by our own daily and doleful experience.

Now the striving against these ghostly enemies is the warfare that we are called upon to accomplish. This is that good fight of faith which Christianity engages us in under the Captain of our salvation; in which, if we manfully acquit ourselves, we may be sure of coming off with success and victory. And this will lead to the

Third and last thing propounded; which was the victory we may obtain by the graces of the Spirit over the works of the flesh; for 'if ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' 'If we resist the devil, (we are told,) he will flee from us;' it is but to stand and oppose, and the day will be ours, for he must either fall or flee before us; nor can the strongest assaults of the flesh prevail without our own consent and yielding to them. All their strength lies in our own treachery, for if we resolve to be true and firm to ourselves, all their suggestions can never hurt us; it is but to withdraw our will and affections from them, and all their power over us would soon cease, and come to nothing. Sensual objects may indeed entice, but they cannot enforce us; and the most inviting charms can have no efficacy, if we turn the deaf ear to them. It is a great mistake to think that the principle of evil hath any such uncontrollable power, as

forcibly to enter our souls, or lead us captive. No, it hath no such hidden and irresistible influence, as to force us to any evil; we are only betrayed into it by our own folly and weakness; and neither Satan, the world or the flesh have any other but willing bond slaves.

But the main preservative against the power of our lusts is the assistance of divine grace, that is at all times sufficient for us, and will enable us to resist and repel the strongest temptations; stronger is the Spirit of God, that worketh in us, than all the evil spirits that conspire against us. And as this grace is sufficient, so is it ever ready for us. The Spirit of God is never wanting to those that seek to, and desire its aid, and never fails such as heartily engage in this spiritual combat. 'If earthly parents, (saith our Saviour,) know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it?' While we strive against sin, we shall be sure to have the Spirit of God to strive with us, and that will derive that strength and power into us that will make us 'more than conquerors.' Hence we find St. Paul, who struggled so hard, and was sometimes foiled by the power of his corruption, at last 'thanking God for giving him the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Rom. vii. 25; 1 Cor. xv. 57. And elsewhere we are told, that if we 'fight this good fight of faith,' we shall finish our course with joy,' and in the end 'receive a crown of glory.' I say then with the apostle, that 'if ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh,' but shall find grace and strength enough to subdue and vanquish them. So that from this discourse we may learn,

1. The difference between a regenerate and unregenerate man; in the one the Spirit prevails, in the other the flesh is predominant: that is, the will of the one is led by the Spirit, which makes him act the deeds, and 'bring forth the fruits of the Spirit;' but the will of the other follows the carnal dictates, and performs the will of the flesh. The character of a good man is to be led by the Spirit into the ways of purity and peace, which is to 'walk in the Spirit.' And the note of a bad man is to follow the sway of sinful and vile affections; which is to 'fulfil the lusts of the flesh.' From whence we may learn,

2. How to know and judge of our spiritual state: if we are acted by the holy Spirit of God, and delight in the forementioned fruits of it, we may safely conclude ourselves in a regenerate state; for 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.'

But if we give up ourselves to the command of a carnal and sensual appetite, and are at the beck of every imperious lust, we are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity; for 'they that walk after the flesh cannot please God,' nor will they ever be accepted by him. Not that every act of concupiscence or inordinate affection will exclude us from the favour of God, or the state

of regeneration; but it is the voluntary consent and wilful continuance in the love and practice of them that denominates an unregenerate man, and excludes from the kingdom of heaven. We find St. Paul sometimes complaining that the body of sin was too strong for him, that the law in his members warred against the law of his mind, and carried him captive to the law of sin and death; but still he lamented and laboured against it, and never left fighting and striving till he had got the mastery: which teaches us what to do in the like case; to wit, not to yield to, but strive against temptation, and to say with Joseph, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Wherefore, in the

Last place, let us learn from hence to 'walk in the Spirit,' and to make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. To encourage us, the apostle assures us, 'There is no condemnation to them that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 1; but they that do otherwise will certainly 'fall into condemnation;' for 'to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.' ver. 6, 13. 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' We see then the way both to life and death; let us all this day make our choice, and such a one too, of which we may never have cause to repent.

DISCOURSE CCXXIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xvii. 11—20.—*And it came to pass, as Jesus went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee: and as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off,* &c.

THE epistle for this day spake of the graces of the Spirit, and the victory obtained by them over the works of the flesh.

The gospel speaks of the miraculous acts of the same holy Spirit, and the victory obtained thereover by Satan and the world, our great and ghostly enemies.

The particular miracle here related is that wrought by our Saviour on the ten lepers, the subject of this day's gospel. In which we may observe,

First, Our Saviour's progress to Jerusalem, which was through the midst of Samaria and Galilee; that which may be learned from thence, is what hath been before observed in the miracle of the deaf and dumb man, viz., Christ's going about doing good, and spreading his healing influences in all places of the country, and the regions round about: of which you may read in the gospel for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity. And as in that miracle of the deaf and dumb man, so in this of the lepers, we may observe,

First, What went before it.
Secondly, What happened in it. And,
Thirdly, What followed after it.

First, As for what went before the miracle, it was Christ's 'entering into a certain village, the ten lepers meeting him there,' and 'the lepers standing afar off.' What this 'certain village' was, it not being named here or elsewhere, will not be much material to inquire. Certain it is, that it was either in Samaria or Galilee, through which he passed in his way to Jerusalem; but wherever it was, it is farther said, that

'Ten men that were lepers met him there.' Sometimes we read that he went to them as physicians do to their sick patients; which is implied in his going about doing good. Where distance or men's infirmities were such, as would not permit them to come to him, there he either went to them, or healed them at a distance: and where he did not readily find objects to shew his mercy and compassion, there he went about to seek them. But here we read that these ten men that were lepers came and met him, upon the report, no doubt, that they had received of him; for he healed one leper before, as he came down from the Mount: of which we read, Matt. viii. 2, 3. St. Mark speaks of the same or another, Mark i. 40. And so doth St. Luke, chap. v. 12, 13. The fame whereof being spread far and near, drew these ten lepers to him. Indeed, it is all one to Omnipotence to cure ten as one, and ten thousand as well as ten; for to an Almighty power all things are possible, and nothing can be hard or difficult to him to whom nothing is impossible. And, therefore, our Saviour did not any way check their boldness, but rather commended their faith in coming to him.

But how did they behave themselves when they came to him? Why, the next words tell us, that they 'stood afar off;' which they did not so much for fear, as to comply with the law of Moses concerning lepers, which was to stand off, and to be separated from society till they were cleansed: for the leprosy being a foul and infectious disease, they that had it were to be removed out of the camp, and to abide in their tents seven days, and the priest was to go forth to them; as we read in the 17th chapter of Leviticus. Accordingly, in compliance with this law, these ten lepers, being unclean by their leprosy, stood afar off, and durst not come near unto him; nor would our Saviour encourage them to break the law of the lepers, by calling them nearer.

But what did they at that distance in order to be healed? Why, it is said, that being afar off, they lifted up their voices, and cried unto him; which cries were loud enough to reach his ears, and were heard by him, as appeared afterward.

To these their cries they added this short petition, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.' They did not harangue it to him about the soreness and sadness of their distemper, to move compassion, or about the means and methods of their cure; nor did

they go to him, like the proud Pharisee, with boasts of their own righteousness, that they were not as bad as other men; nor with long extempore prayers, to charm him with the multitude and variety of words, which are fulsome and nauseous to all they are applied to, and no way become true and humble supplicants: but they cried to him with these few hearty words, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us.' And, indeed, we find in Scripture, that these few hearty words have prevailed more, and been attended with greater successes than long and tedious orations.

The poor Publican, when he went up solemnly to the temple to worship, uttered only this short litany, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,' Luke xviii. 13, and was sent away justified to his own house, before the proud Pharisee, with his long robes and long prayers. The poor blind man, in the same chapter, following our Saviour with his earnest prayer, uttered only these words, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me.' ver. xxviii. 29. His whole prayer was no more, which, it is said in the next verse, he went on repeating again and again, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon me;' and the effect of it was, that his eyes were opened, and his sight restored to him. In like manner the lepers in the text lifted up their voices, and said more than once, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us;' and what the success was, we shall see by and by. In the mean time, we may observe the wisdom and piety of our Church, in inserting this frequent and successful petition into her liturgy or public service, doubling and trebling it in the litany to the three persons of the blessed Trinity; saying, 'Lord, have mercy upon us; Christ, have mercy upon us; Lord, have mercy upon us;' which, if repeated with earnestness and affection, is so far from a vain repetition, as some have vainly objected, that it is the most effectual way to obtain audience and acceptance. These are the previous circumstances that went before the working of this miracle; from whence I proceed,

Secondly, To the miracle itself, the account whereof follows in the next verse, 'And when he saw them,' &c. It seems, they were not so far off but he could both see and hear them. They were not indeed near enough for him to touch them, and so were not healed, as the leper in St. Matthew was, by a touch of his hand: but the healing virtue was conveyed to them by a glance of his eye or a motion of his mind; for he used not those sanative words, 'I will, be thou healed;' or 'I will, be thou clean;' as he did to other lepers, which words immediately drove the leprosy from them, as we read, Matt. viii. 3, and Luke v. 13; but all he said to them was, 'Go shew yourselves to the priest;' which words were not wont to make, but to follow the cure. The words refer to the law of Moses concerning lepers, in Lev. xiv. where the leper was commanded to be brought to the priest, who was to offer a sacrifice for him in order to his cleansing; and when the cure was wrought, he was required by the law to shew himself to the priest, and to make an offering, that he might

pronounce him clean, without which they were not admitted into the camp or congregation. Accordingly our Saviour, in obedience to the law, to which he was wont to shew a great conformity, said unto them, 'Go immediately unto the priest;' adding, as Dr. Hammond supposes, Before ye come thither, ye shall be cured: upon which, without any hesitation or delay, they go their way, and 'it came to pass, as they went they were cleansed.' This was the miracle, and for such it was taken by all that saw or heard of it; the curing of the leprosy especially, without the use of any means, being looked upon as the peculiar work of God.

Thirdly, But what followed after the working of this miracle? Why, there were three things observable that attended it; viz., the thankfulness of one of the persons healed, the ingratitude of all the rest, and the blessing pronounced on the thankful person. For the

First, We read, that 'one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks; and he was a Samaritan.' Where we may observe,

1. His sense of the mercy received; 'He saw that he was healed.' This is the first step or degree of thankfulness, which begins with the sense of benefits received: for none can be thankful for what he hath no feeling or perception of; the benefit must strike the mind, and affect the heart, before there can be any true gratitude for it: yea, it must be well considered and frequently recollected, or else it will sink away into oblivion and ingratitude. 'Whoso is wise, (saith the Psalmist,) will consider these things, and he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' Psal. cvii. 43. For himself, he made the mercies of the Lord the daily subject of his study and meditation, and often called upon his soul to bless the Lord, and not to forget his benefits. Accordingly this leper in the text felt his mind touched with a grateful sense of the kindness received, in curing his leprosy, and restoring his health to him. He could not forget or think slightly of it; and that made him,

2. 'To turn back,' to visit and thank his benefactor: being healed in the way, he presently went back to own and acknowledge the favour. When the rest went away unconcerned, without any regard to the mercy received, or the person that bestowed it; he, on the contrary, could not rest till he returned to his physician, and paid him that tribute of acknowledgment that was due to him. One great act of gratitude is to own and esteem a kindness; and therefore we find David, that great pattern of thanksgiving, often acknowledging and magnifying the Divine favours, extolling them to the skies, saying, 'Thy mercy reaches to the heavens, and thy faithfulness to the clouds.' Such a deep sense and resentment had this leper of the kindness our Saviour shewed to him; and that made him,—

3. 'With a loud voice to glorify God.' His thankful heart

led him not only to publish it to the world, but to break out into loud praises and thanksgivings unto God for it; ascribing the cure of his leprosy wholly to the Divine power and goodness, and saying with the devout Psalmist, 'Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory.' This is a high act of gratitude, and the best return we can make for all his benefits: and therefore this grateful leper having no better requital to make to him, fell to praising and glorifying God; which is more acceptable to him than the most costly sacrifices and burnt-offerings: and this he did in all the lowliest postures of humility and adoration; for we read,—

4. That 'he fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.' Where the mind is duly affected with a hearty sense of Divine favours, there it will appear in the humble gestures of the body; for we are bid to glorify God with our bodies as well as souls, which are both his, and that is best done by the humblest postures and expressions of both. Examples of which we have many in holy Scripture: David, in his prayers and praises, was mostly on his knees, and often calls upon others to 'worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.' The poor Publican 'could scarce lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast,' out of a deep sense of his own unworthiness. And here the poor leper 'fell down on his face at Jesus's feet,' to express his thankfulness. Though he before stood off by reason of his leprosy, yet, being now cured of that unclean disease, he came near unto him, and fell down on his face before him: of whom it is farther added, that 'he was a Samaritan,' to signify that he was no Jew, from whom such things might he better expected; but an inhabitant of Samaria, to whom the Jews bore a great hatred both as to their religion and country.

But were the rest as grateful as this poor Samaritan? No, far from it; for we find our Saviour, in the next words, upbraiding their ingratitude, and saying, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?' adding, 'There are not found any that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.' All the rest went their way without making any return at all; they took no notice of the kindness shewed to them, but utterly forgat both him that healed them, and the manner of their cure. Instead of owning the mercy, they cast off all regard or resentment of it. When they should give glory to God, they either ascribed it to something else, or totally overlooked it. Instead of falling down on their face before him in a humble acknowledgment and adoration of his goodness, they turned their backs upon him in a vile and ungrateful contempt of all his kindness, forgetting the God that helped them, and shewing no regard to the operations of his hand.

Now, our Saviour's mentioning and upbraiding their ingratitude, shews all such unworthiness to be highly displeasing and offensive to him; though yet his infinite patience and goodness

was such, as to persevere in doing good, notwithstanding all their base and foul ingratitude towards him. This generous Friend and Benefactor to mankind met with discouragements and unworthy returns enough to stop the current of his bounty; for he was slighted by those whom he had most obliged, yea, and sought to be betrayed by them whom he came to save; and yet all this and much more could not make him desist from shewing favours. He tells us himself, that our heavenly Father is 'kind to the unthankful,' for he maketh the 'sun to shine on the good and bad, and the rain to descend on the just and unjust;' and wills us to be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful, and so shall we shew ourselves the children of the Most High.

This is the sense and main design of the gospel for this day, to imitate our Saviour in doing good; not in the miraculous way that he did, for that is above our power, but in the ordinary ways and methods which he is pleased to vouchsafe us.

But the gospel concludes with a blessing pronounced on the thankful leper, and a great commendation of his faith: he said unto him, 'Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.' The poor leper was yet either upon his knees, or prostrate upon his face, from a humble sense of the kindness he had received; which made our Saviour say unto him, 'Arise,' stand upon thy feet, and go away to the business of thy vocation, whereunto thou art called; withal adding the motive of his kindness, and the cure wrought upon him, in these words, 'Thy faith hath made thee whole:' thy firm belief of my power and willingness to help thee hath engaged me to do it for thee, and the strength of thy faith hath procured thee this soundness. Indeed, great things are spoken in Scripture concerning faith, and ascribed to the power of it; it can remove mountains, raise the dead, heal all manner of diseases, and conquer all opposition. The author to the Hebrews imputes all the great achievements of the patriarchs and other worthies to the strength of their faith; who by that 'subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained the promises, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong,' &c. And no wonder, for faith engages that Divine power that is able to do all things.

And thus having considered the chief things contained in this gospel, it will be requisite to infer some practical lessons from them. And,—

1st, From the miraculous cure of these lepers, we may farther confirm our faith in the Divinity of the person and power of our blessed Saviour. Among other things, which the disciples of John were bid to tell their master, to convince him of his Messiahship, this was one, that 'the lepers were cleansed,' Matt. xi. 5; which, in the way that he did it, could only be effected by a Divine power, and may serve to increase our faith and hope in him.

2dly, From these lepers' short and successful prayer, consisting

only of these few words, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us,' we may learn to avoid the practice of the heathen, who think to be heard for their much speaking; and the Pharisees, who value themselves for their long prayers: whereas God Almighty neither looks nor cares for either; he knows our necessities before we ask; and if our hearts be right, a few words will serve the turn for the supply of them. Solomon hath minded us, that 'God is in heaven, and we upon earth, and therefore our words to him should be few;' for thereby we best own his infinite greatness, together with his exceeding goodness and readiness to help us, which will prevail more with him than a multitude or variety of words can do: and a short ejaculation, darted from a devout heart, will go farther, and pierce deeper, than the longest speeches and harangues of the hypocrite.

3dly, From the leper's returning to give thanks, and the kind acceptance it met with, we learn the great virtue of gratitude, which consists in owning and glorifying God for all his blessings. Indeed, gratitude is a debt due for benefits received, and is therefore generally reckoned a branch of natural justice; for in giving thanks we are true and just to our benefactor, but in omitting of it we are false and unjust to him; and therefore we are often bid in holy Scripture, 'in every thing to give thanks.' We are forward enough to ask for what we want; as our daily food, for rain in case of drought, and fair weather in case of immoderate rain; and so likewise for other blessings. Oh! let us not be backward to return thanks for what we receive, but learn of this poor leper, who, being healed in the way, would not go a step farther, till he had gone back to pay his acknowledgment to his great Benefactor. This is the practice of all grateful souls; from whom we should learn to do likewise.

4thly, From the other nine's not returning to give thanks, and our Saviour's resentment of it, we may learn to hate and abhor the sin of ingratitude, which is a vice odious and hateful in the sight of all men: *ingratum si dixeris, omnia dixeris;* to say a man is ungrateful, is to say the worst that can be said of any. Let it never, then, be said of us, that we pray for rain, or fair weather, or other needful blessings when we want them, but never come to give God thanks for them when we have them: like the hog in the fable, who greedily eat the acorns, but never looked up to the tree from whence they came; or these nine lepers, that earnestly prayed to be healed, but when that was done, never returned to give God the glory of it: let all such ingratitude be far from us.

Lastly, From God's blessing the thankful leper, and ascribing all to the strength of his faith, let us learn to pray for those excellent graces, which will keep us sound here, and make us for ever happy hereafter.

DISCOURSE CCXXX.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GAL. vi. 11, to the end. — *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, constrain you to be circumcised,* &c.

THE collect for this day directs us to pray, that God would keep his church with his perpetual mercy; and because our own great frailty daily exposes us to many dangers, we beseech him to keep us from all things hurtful, and to lead us to all things profitable to our salvation, &c. Now, the keeping of the Church here prayed for, is chiefly to keep it in the true faith; and because there are many things that are apt to corrupt it, and to make men fall away from the purity of it, as prosperity and persecution, we are here taught to pray to be preserved from all things that may prejudice, and to be kept to all things that may promote, our salvation. Accordingly, the epistle for this day acquaints us with St. Paul's great care to preserve the Galatians in the purity of the christian faith, against the attempts of the false teachers, who sought to bring them back to the antiquated rites and ceremonies of the Jewish worship.

The epistle begins with these words: 'Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.' The large letter here intended, is this epistle to the Galatians, wherein he enlarged himself on this point, to confirm them in the principles of Christianity, which some endeavoured to subvert, by preaching up the perpetual obligation of Moses's law. And though other of his epistles were written by an amanuensis, and only the salutation with his own hand, that they might be known to be his; yet this he tells them was all written by himself with his own hand, that they might give the greater heed to it.

Theophylact's conjecture on this place is, that St. Paul was accused for preaching elsewhere for the observation of the old law, contrary to what is contained in this epistle, and therefore was forced to write a large letter with his own hand, for his own vindication in this matter. This conjecture, I say, is wholly precarious and without ground; for we find no where any mention of such an accusation, and therefore there could be no need of any such vindication. But the conjecture of some is yet more vain, viz., that St. Paul, in these words, endeavoured to excuse the badness of his writing, the largeness of the letters, or illness of the characters used in it; that whereas his other epistles, written by an amanuensis, were in a fairer and better hand, this of his own writing was more rough and unpolished. But this was too mean a matter for the consideration of an apostle, whom we cannot suppose to have condescended to so trifling an apology. In short, then,

The plain sense of these words is, that the apostle being informed of some false teachers crept into the churches of Galatia, who preached up circumcision, and other Mosaical rites, he wrote this large letter or epistle with his own hand, to warn them against them, and to prevent their being seduced by them. To which end, he proceeds, in the next words, to describe these false teachers,—

1st, By their plausible behaviour, or 'making a fair show in the flesh.'

2dly, By the badness of their doctrine: 'They constrain you to be circumcised.'

3dly, By their evil end and design, which was to avoid 'persecution for the cross of Christ.'

1st, For the plausibleness of their behaviour, it is expressed in these words, 'As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh.' It is the guise and practice of false teachers, to put fair, though false colours upon what they say or do; to make use of disguises, to hide the evil and mischief they intend, and to make the fairest show and appearance they can. Our Saviour tells us, that the 'false prophets came in sheep's clothing;' that is, with soft and smooth pretences, though 'inwardly they were ravenous wolves,' that came not but to devour and destroy. The apostle tells us of others, that 'with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' Of all such we are bid to beware, as those that 'come with all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, able if it were possible to deceive the very elect.' Of this kind were the false teachers in this chapter, who desired to make a fair show in the flesh, that is, would be thought the most zealous and conscientious of all the Jews. And such are the dissenting false teachers in our days, who by feigned shows of zeal and reformation, delude the ignorant into schism and sedition. Of all such we cannot be too cautious, by giving no heed to their words, and shunning their ways and their example. But to the plausibleness of their behaviour, the apostle adds,

2dly, The unsoundness of their doctrine, in these words, 'They constrain you to be circumcised;' meaning, that they urged upon these Galatians the necessity of circumcision, though that painful rite was done away, and exchanged for the easier rite of baptism by our blessed Saviour; yet to make the fairer show in the flesh, they press them to take this mark of circumcision in their flesh, being the seal of the covenant made to Abraham and his seed. For this they urged the institution of God himself, who laid this ordinance of circumcision in charge on Abraham and his posterity for ever.' Gen. xvii. For which reason they pretended it to carry an eternal obligation, being called therefore 'the covenant of circumcision.' Acts vii. 8. This shaked the faith of many, and begat that first and great controversy in the christian church, about the continuance of the rites and ceremonies of Moses's law, which our apostle in this and sundry

other of his epistles hath fully decided for us, having by many arguments proved and determined for the abrogation of them: for Christ the substance being come, in whom all those typical rites and shadows were fulfilled, they all vanished and were dispelled by the brightness of his coming, as mists and vapours are scattered by the approach of the sun. So that to continue those rites, is a virtual denial of Christ's coming in the flesh: and therefore St. Paul testifies and declares unto them, that 'if ye be circumcised, Christ can profit you nothing.' Gal. v. 2. And ver. 3, 'I testify again, (saith he,) to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to keep the whole law;' and so can have no justification thence. Christ is become of no effect to them, being fallen from the grace and favour of the gospel. The sense of all which is, that by sticking to the old covenant of circumcision, they deprive themselves of all the benefit of the new covenant, into which we are now initiated by baptism.

But, 3dly, Why did these teachers, who were in a great measure brought over to Christianity, so far comply with the Jews, as to preach and press circumcision on the Gentile converts? Why that, the apostle tells us, was 'only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.' There was at that time a great persecution raised against the Christians: the Jews, out of their great zeal to the old law, would not hear of a new gospel; the doctrine of 'Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;' which made them persecute this way even to the death. Hence some, for fear of punishment, and others for the reproach of the cross, revolted from Christianity, and fell back to the old law: and we are told of these in our text, that they adhered to circumcision merely to avoid persecution. It was not any conscientious persuasion of the obligation of the law, that moved them thus to keep to it: for the next verse tells us, that 'they themselves that are circumcised, do not keep the law in other matters;' yea, sometimes can dispense with that too, when it may be done with safety. 'But they desire to have you circumcised, (saith he,) only that they may glory in your flesh:' meaning, that the true reason of all this was their own advantage, and their own glory; partly to avoid the fury and trouble of the Jewish zealots, and partly that they might be able to boast of the many proselytes they had made to the judaical law. This is that 'fair show in the flesh,' mentioned before, and their 'glorying in your flesh,' mentioned here; both which signify, their getting some glory and interest to themselves, by having you circumcised.

But these men's seeking for glory by such sinister and indirect ways, and shrinking from the doctrine of the cross for fear of persecution, made St. Paul let them know, that all true glory lies in other things; namely, in a firm constancy of mind, and a steady adherence to the doctrine of Christ against all opposition: and therefore he speaks in his own name in the following verse,

saying, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world.' That is, all glorying in the flesh is vain, and all boasting of worldly wealth and honour is fruitless and insignificant; such idle vaunts and vain glorying as this, proceed only from the fond suggestions and compliances of false teachers, who make merchandise of you: but God forbid (saith the apostle) that I should ever make use of these or any other like arts to beguile you, or to draw disciples into such pernicious errors and delusions. The only true matter of boasting is in the cross of Christ, which they would make you either afraid or ashamed of. For my own part (saith he) I know nothing worthy to be gloried of or rejoiced in, save that only: and accordingly all my joy and rejoicing is in my constancy to my Saviour, and the sufferings I have undergone for his sake; which have made the pleasures, honours, and riches of the world altogether lifeless and untempting to me, and likewise me as dead and mortified to any inordinate love or desire of them. Hence we find him declaring to the Romans, that he was 'not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.' Rom. i. 16. Whatever mean thoughts others might have of it, or whatever reflections they might cast upon it, he was so far from being ashamed, that he made it the object of his greatest glory and rejoicing, knowing it to be the only way and means of obtaining life and salvation.

Again, he told the Corinthians, that 'he determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ and him crucified.' 1 Cor. ii. 2. And to the Philippians he affirmed, that he 'counted all other knowledge but as loss and dung, in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, for whom he had suffered the loss of all, and counted it as nothing, that he might win Christ.' Phil. iii. 8. He had been before mentioning the privileges of circumcision, in which he could pretend as great a share as any: for he was 'circumcised the eighth day,' according to the law given to Abraham; he was 'of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and as touching the law a Pharisee.' ver. 5. And yet all these privileges he reckoned of no worth or value to him without an interest in Christ, which was infinitely above them all. And therefore he here tells the Galatians, that all insisting on these privileges, and all other contests about the law, are frivolous and to no purpose, 'for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.' Now under the gospel it is not material whether a man be circumcised or no, for he can be the better for neither: that which is now required, is to be regenerate by baptism, to be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, and thereby to become new creatures: and such must all be that come to Christ; 'For if any man be in Christ (saith the apostle) he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things

are become new.' 2 Cor. v. 17. The old sinful practices are to be laid aside, and the antiquated rites of the law to be done away, and we enter upon a new state that obliges to newness of life. For the gospel brings a change of things and persons from what they were before; there is more grace, better promises, greater assistances, and ampler encouragements than were made known before; all which call upon us to lead better lives, and so to become new creatures.

'And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God.' Which words may be understood either as a wish, that all who lead their lives by these measures, and walk as becometh the gospel of Christ, may have all peace and mercy multiplied upon them; or else as a promise, that they who do so, shall certainly find all that peace and happiness, which the gospel exhibits and holds forth to them. Both which prayer and promise is here made, not only for those who newly embraced the faith of the gospel, but for the whole Israel of God, that believe on him, whether they be Jew or Gentile, bond or free, for they are all one in Christ Jesus.

Having said this to them, he adds in the following words, 'From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus:' that is, for the future I desire that none would give me any farther trouble in this matter, for I have other work to do, which by my office I am bound to attend and discharge. And there can be no reason to cause any more vexation to me; for I have already felt those afflictions in my body, which in some measure resemble the sufferings of Christ, and are so many marks and tokens of my sincerity and constancy to him.

And then he closes all with this salutation, 'Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, Amen.' With this prayer he begins and ends most of his epistles, which contains his hearty wish for the prosperity both of body and soul, and that all the favours and blessings of heaven, both temporal and spiritual, may be multiplied upon them; which wish we ought all to have for all our fellow-christians.

This is the sum of the epistle for this day, from whence we may learn the following lessons: And,

1. From St. Paul's writing so large a letter with his own hand, we may learn to spare no pains for the satisfaction of doubting Christians, and to rescue them from the evil arts and designs of deceivers. We see what pains the apostle here takes with these Galatians, to keep them steady to the truths of the gospel, and to arm them against those judaizing teachers, that would urge circumcision upon them, and introduce other abolished rites of Moses's law. With the like care and diligence ought we to instruct ignorant and deluded people in the faith of Christ, to reduce those to the unity of the christian church that have strayed

from it, and to preserve them from the errors and insinuations of false teachers, that labour to seduce them.

2. From St. Paul's discourse here, we may learn to 'stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.' St. Luke tells us, that the Church sometime groaned under a heavy and burdensome yoke of carnal ordinances, such as neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear: from this yoke Jesus Christ hath happily delivered his Church, having blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and rescued us from the beggarly rites and rudiments of the ceremonial law, and particularly the painful rite of circumcision. Let us not then suffer ourselves to be again brought in bondage to these things; Christ being the sole Master of our faith, let us not become the servants of men. This advice St. Paul frequently gave in most of his epistles; which yet we must not strain so far as to think all comely ceremonies relating to time, place, and gesture, to be now forbidden in the service of God; for without some of these, it cannot be performed in that decency and order that is required: but that we are not to return again to the Mosaical ceremonies and sacrifices, which being types and shadows of good things to come, must vanish and cease at the coming of them. Insomuch that we are now called to no other circumcision, save that of the heart, nor to offer up any other calves than those of the lips: for 'we are the circumcision, (saith the apostle,) that worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' Phil. iii. 3.

3. From what hath been said, we may learn not to shrink from the faith for fear of persecution, but rather with our apostle to glory in the cross of Christ, by which we shall be crucified to the world, and the world to us. We read in this epistle of some that pressed circumcision, for fear of displeasing the Jews, and suffering by them: but St. Paul stood his ground and feared nothing; he would not forsake the truths of the gospel; for all their threats, but rather courted than feared the cross in Christ's cause: 'I am ready, (saith he,) not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' Acts xxi. 13. He preferred his sufferings at Jerusalem, before all their triumphs at Rome; and valued the cross of Christ above all the trophies of the greatest conqueror: which should teach us all courage and constancy in his cause, and to be above the frowns and menaces of the greatest enemies; knowing that the cross is set in the way to a crown, and if we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified together.

4. We learn here, that no external privileges or advantages are sufficient of themselves to bring us to heaven; for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; nor will baptism, or any other gospel privileges, do us any service, without a true faith, and the answer of a good conscience.

5. They that walk by the rules of the gospel, shall find peace and mercy heaped upon them; and so shall the whole Israel of God, both Jew and Gentile, for there is no difference.

Lastly, Since the gospel of Christ is attended with trouble and persecution, let us make the yoke as easy as we can to one another; and since the best suffer much by the professed enemies of Christianity, let them not find any additional troubles from its friends and professors. This is St. Paul's request in his own and others' behalf, 'From henceforth, let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus;' which honourable scars I esteem higher than the greatest marks and badges of worldly glory: and if we can do so, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will be with our spirits. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXXXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW vi. 24, to the end.—*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life*, &c.

THE design of this gospel, is to take off men's hearts from an inordinate love and pursuit of the perishing things of this world, and to place them upon a more lasting and substantial treasure in heaven. But because some may be apt to say, that they consist of a body as well as a soul, and they must provide for both, and they have a want of good things for the one in this life, as well as for the other in the next, and so must divide their care and affections between them:

To these our Saviour here replies, 'No man can serve two masters,' &c. Which he here proves, because the 'loving of the one,' will be the 'hating of the other; and the holding to the one, will be the despising of the other.' And then applies it to the present case, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' The rest of the chapter is an inference from this, and an enlargement upon it: of which in their order. And,—

First, Of the proposition here laid down: 'No man can serve two masters.' This will be evident to any, that considers the properties and duties of a good servant.

The first whereof is obedience, which is the doing the master's will, which cannot be done to two; especially, if they interfere as to time, and the matter of their commands. If both lay their commands at the same time, or if one commands one thing, and the other another, it will be impossible to observe both.

Again, diligence is another duty of a servant, which is the minding and doing his master's business: 'Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but with sincerity and singleness of heart;'

being as well employed out of the master's sight, as when his eye is upon him. Now this cannot be to two masters; for if one behold him doing his work, the other must necessarily see him neglecting his, it being impossible to be doing both at the same time.

Moreover, fidelity is another duty and property of a good servant, which cannot be to two masters, for a servant owes his whole service to his master; and none can give his whole service to two, for what is given to the one must be taken from the other; and if one hath all, the other can have none; and, consequently, none can truly serve or be faithful to two masters.

But our Saviour's arguments here are both of them irrefragable.

1st, Because no man can love two masters as he ought, for if he love the one, he will hate the other. Love is of an uniting nature; if it be centred in one object, it is commonly true and lasting; but if it be divided among more, it becomes weak, and soon turns into hatred. And therefore the apostle wills us neither to be, nor to have many masters; for that will divide the affections, and instead of love and kindness, will breed enmity and dislike.

2dly, No man can be constant to two masters; for to hold to the one, will be to despise the other. The mind cannot equally incline to two objects, but, like the scales of a balance, the raising of one will be the lowering of the other. In this case, there is no holding the scales even; the more the one rises in esteem, the more the other sinks, and the sticking to the one will be unavoidably accompanied with the falling off from the other. This is evident both in the theory and the practice. From whence I proceed to

The application that Christ here makes of it, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon,' that is, God and the world; and that for all the forementioned reasons. As,—

1st, Ye cannot be true and faithful to God and mammon; for we owe unto God our whole service both of body, soul, and spirit, which are all his, and must be entirely devoted to his service: and, indeed, all the service we can pay him falls vastly short of what is due to him. And if all our service be his, we must be unfaithful in giving any to another; and, consequently, we rob God of all that which is given to mammon. Again,—

2dly, Ye cannot love God and mammon: so St. John expressly tells us, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' 1 John ii. 15. These two are as inconsistent as light and darkness, and can no more agree together than Christ and Belial. We are commanded to 'love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength.' And if God must have all, there can be none left for mammon.

3dly, Ye cannot fear and honour God and mammon; for all

our fear and all our honour is to be directed and fixed on God only, and none is to be feared and honoured but in relation to him. This we find him challenging from us, 'If I am a Father, where is my honour? if a Master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts.' Mal. i. 6. We are bid to fear God, and none beside him; and he is so jealous of his honour, that he will not share it with mammon, nor give his glory to any other.

Lastly, Ye cannot obey God and mammon; for their commands are directly contrary and inconsistent with each other, and therefore it is impossible to serve both. God calls for our whole heart; mammon is for dividing it, and would be content with a part, knowing that thereby he shall have all; for God will have all or none, he loves a broken, but hates a divided heart. God calls to holiness and all purity of conversation, mammon to uncleanness and all superfluity of naughtiness. God calls to truth and honesty in all our words and actions, mammon to fraud and double-dealing. God calls to acts of mercy and charity, mammon to cruelty and oppression. God calls to patience and contentment in all conditions, mammon to murmuring and purloining. Lastly, God calls to peace and unity in his church, mammon to discord and divisions. And who can obey such opposite and irreconcileable commands? These, and many more inconsistencies, that may be found in these two masters, render it altogether impossible to serve both; which plainly shews the truth of what is here affirmed, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon.' From whence I proceed, in the next place,

To the inference our Saviour here draws from it, in these words: 'Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.' 'Therefore,' that is, since you cannot serve two masters, God and mammon, I give you this caution, not to divide your thoughts between them, but to take off your thoughts from the world, and to fix them wholly upon God. The word here rendered, 'take no thought,' in the original signifies to divide the mind; and so it is a caution against dubiousness and perplexity of mind. Be not divided or distracted in your thoughts between these two, but take no thought for the world, or the concerns of it, and let all your thoughts and desires be placed on God and the things of heaven; saying, with David, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.'

But must we, then, cast off all thoughts about the world? What, then, will become of our lives and our bodies? How shall we feed the one, and clothe the other, which cannot be without some care and thoughts about these worldly matters? In answer to this, our Saviour does not bid us to cast off all thoughts of these things, but only to think and labour for them

in the way of God's appointment. Our thoughts are chiefly to dwell upon God and the things above, and on earthly things only in subordination to him, and according to his order and direction: and this is not forsaking God, and revolting to the world; but we serve God in thus serving mammon and ourselves, when we do it so as he hath allowed and directed in his word. So that by the taking no thought about food and raiment is to be meant,—

1st, Of taking no disquieting or perplexing thoughts about them, such as rack the mind, and in a manner eat out the heart; thereby wasting and weakening the body, to get the means of preserving it. Again,—

2dly, Here are forbidden all doubting and distrusting thoughts about food and raiment, such as cause men to question the truth and faithfulness of God's promises, and doubt his care and willingness to provide necessaries for them: like the murmuring Israelites, 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness, and can he give bread and flesh to his people?' Which distrustful thoughts are a great dishonour unto God, and a vile reproach both to his power and goodness.

3dly, Our Saviour condemns here all unjust and deceitful thoughts, such as set men a coveting and invading another's substance, putting them upon overreaching or going beyond their brother in any matter, and seeking to enrich themselves upon the spoils of their neighbour. All taking of such thoughts for the world is a plain leaving of God, and substituting our own providence in the room of his, and, consequently, it is a serving of mammon more than our Maker.

In short, there is a care of diligence that puts men upon all regular and honest ways of getting a comfortable livelihood, by depending on God's blessing in the use of all good means, and quietly submitting the success of all unto God. This is not only lawful, but laudable and necessary, and is a great part of our duty, both as we are men, and as we are Christians.

Beside which, there is a care of diffidence, that fills men with unreasonable fears and torments about getting these earthly things, and leads them to all the evil methods of fraud and injustice to bring them to pass, distracting their minds about the issue and event of matters, and destroying all the comfort of their lives in seeking these worldly comforts. Such a carking infidelity as this usurps upon God, by casting off all thoughts of his blessing and providence, and is not serving God but mammon: whereas we are taught to moderate our desires and endeavours for these things, and to banish all anxious and doubting thoughts about them. For to cark too much, is to distrust God; not to care at all, is to tempt him; by the one we invade God's part, by the other we neglect our own; both which are highly displeasing and offensive to him. This is briefly the sense of our Saviour's caution, 'Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor for your body, what ye shall put

on;' which is, not to be too thoughtful or solicitous about food and raiment. And because men are too apt to fall into this evil, he uses sundry arguments to dissuade them from it; as,—

(1.) In the next words, he asks the question, 'Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' which is an argument *a majore ad minus*, or a reasoning from a greater thing to a less. If God hath given us life, which is the greatest of all gifts, how can we doubt his giving us meat, which is far less? Is it not easier to support life, than it was to give it? and can it be supposed that he who hath done the latter will not do the former? Again, 'Is not the body more than raiment?' Is not the body, which is so curiously and wonderfully made in all its parts, far more considerable than a little raiment to cover it? And can we think that he who hath given us the one, will deny the other? But the better to prevail with us, and to banish all distrust in these matters, he enlarges himself in the following words, by giving us many instances of his care in this kind; and first for food, he sends us to the fowls of the air, 'Behold, (saith he,) the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.' To remove all anxious thoughts for meat and drink, he wills us to look up to the birds of the air, and consider how well they are provided for, and how cheerfully they live upon the bounty of Providence, and that, too, without any labour or pain of their own: instead of filling their heads with care, they fill the air with the melody of their warbling notes; and instead of gathering into barns, they gather food from all parts of the earth, and make every garden their granary. 'They neither sow nor reap, they are at no labour in tillage or husbandry, neither putting the corn into the ground, nor taking it out, and yet they want for nothing; 'your heavenly Father feedeth them.' And then he asks the question, 'Are ye not better than they?' Where, as he before argued from the greater to the less, so here he reasons from the less to the greater. Is not man the most excellent of all creatures, being made lord of the whole creation? Hath not God subjected all other creatures under his feet, and designed them for his use? And if his providence extends to these inferior creatures, we may well think it will not be withheld from us, who are so far above them: 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, (saith our Saviour,) and yet not one of them falleth to the ground without your heavenly Father: fear ye not then, for ye are of more value than many sparrows.' Matt. x. 29, 30, &c. To this our Saviour subjoins another question, 'Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?' The stature of the body, whether taller or shorter, is much less than the welfare of the body, and the length or shortness of life is of less consideration than life itself: and if, with all our care, we cannot add an inch to the dimensions of the body, nor a minute to the length of our life, which is the less,

how can we think we are able to provide for the welfare of both, which is much greater? Yea, our Saviour tells us, we cannot make one hair white or black; and is it not much better to depend upon the providence of God, who can do all things, than upon our ownselves, who can do nothing? Then,—

(2.) For raiment he sends us to the lilies and flowers of the field; saying, 'Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' The natural beauty of the lily and the rose exceeds all the artificial colours and embroidery of the gaudiest attire, and nothing of the most affected pomp and bravery of princes can equal or compare with it. The grass of the field is sometimes clothed in that pleasant verdure, that at once refreshes and ravishes the eye of the beholder; and many flowers appear in that scarlet, crimson, and purple dress, that far outvies the most costly and artificial finery: insomuch that Solomon in all his glory and gorgeous attire, which was as great as the wealth and the wisdom of the world could set him out with, was not arrayed like one of these. Which natural gaiety is entirely the work of God, and bestowed upon them without any care or labour of theirs, for they toil not, neither do they spin, nor contribute any thing to the glory and splendour wherein they appear. The most exquisite works of art are but faint resemblances and imitations of these of nature; no pencil can draw a paleness or redness comparable to those of the lily and the rose; and therefore the Holy Ghost, to set forth the glory and beauty of the church, compares it to the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

'Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' If he hath made such rich and glorious provision for those short-lived flowers, that were designed only for our delight and diversion, will he not do much more for his own children, who are so much above them? Sure we may well be accounted men of little faith if we doubt these things. In short, both the fowls of the air, and the flowers of the field, may teach us to banish all distrustful thoughts of food and raiment, and to depend upon God in the use of means for the supply of them.

From hence our Saviour takes occasion, in the next words, to renew his former caution: 'Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?' adding withal two farther reasons:—

1st. Because it is the guise and practice of the heathens to be solicitous in these matters: 'For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.'

2dly. Because our care about them is needless: 'For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.'

As for the Gentiles, they, wanting the knowledge of God, and serving those impotent deities, that neither know their wants, nor are able to supply them, it is no strange thing, if they cark and toil for themselves, who have no sense or notion of a Providence to take care of them; but for Christians, who are better instructed, and fully satisfied of the being and providence of God, who presides over, and provides for all his creatures, it must be an unreasonable and unpardonable diffidence in them, to question his power, or distrust his readiness to help them; especially considering what is here farther added, that 'our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things;' where the relation we bear to him as our heavenly Father, and the sense he hath of all our wants, are sufficient to engage us to 'cast all our care upon him, who careth for us.' A father, you know, cannot see his children lack necessaries, especially if he be able to relieve them; why, our heavenly Father is able not only to supply all our necessities, but to do for us 'abundantly more than we can either ask or think,' and hath declared his great willingness and readiness to do so; for 'if earthly parents are willing to give good things to their children, how much more will your Father that is in heaven give good things to them that ask them! which is enough to make us follow the apostle's advice, 'to be careful for nothing, but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make our requests known unto God,' Phil. iv. 6.

But may we not then seek these earthly things, but rely wholly upon divine providence for the obtaining of them? Why, that our Saviour answers in the next words, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' If your principal care and labour be employed about heavenly matters, you shall not want a sufficient portion of earthly things; they shall be added as vantage to a bargain, or as a viaticum to carry you on through this world in the way to a better. David tells us, that though the lions may lack and suffer hunger, yet they that fear the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good; for God will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from him that leads a godly life: and therefore our Saviour bids his disciples not to 'labour for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to eternal life;' that is, our labour for the one should be nothing in comparison to the other.

But may we not lay up something for the casualties of times, and provide for the future? That our Saviour answers in the last words of the chapter: 'Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself:' he that provides for you to-day will do the same to-morrow, and therefore do not forestall evils by any anxious fears and cares about them: 'for sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.'

Thus I have gone through the gospel for this day, from which we may learn many lessons; I shall mention only two. And,—

1st. Since we cannot serve two masters, God and mammon, let us choose this day the service of God, and resolve with Joshua, that 'whatever others do, I and my house will serve the Lord,' Josh. xxiv.; to which we are encouraged, he being the best of masters that sets his servants on the best of work, and pays them the best of wages. But because mammon or the world is apt to put in for a share of our service, and to entice us from God's service, under a pretence of providing necessaries for ourselves here, let us learn,—

2dly. To put our trust in God, and to cast ourselves upon his providence in the way of his own appointment; and by thus committing ourselves and our ways unto him, he will bring things to pass, that tend to our ease and comfort here, and our eternal happiness hereafter; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EPH. iii. 13, to the end.—*I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of the Lord Jesus*, &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to implore the divine pity to purify and protect his Church; and because it cannot continue in safety without his succour, we beseech him to preserve it evermore by his help and goodness.

In the epistle for the day we have an account of St. Paul's praying thus in the behalf of the church of Ephesus, which epistle begins with his request to these Ephesians, and is continued with his prayer for them, and concludes with his doxology, or praising God in their behalf; each of which must be particularly considered. And,—

First, Of the request that St. Paul here makes to these Ephesians, in those words, 'I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.' The apostle had endured many and great afflictions for their sake; for he, being the apostle of the Gentiles, ordained and sent to preach the gospel to them, was for that reason mightily opposed and persecuted by the Jews, who judged it unlawful to preach to any but those of their own church and nation; and no wonder, this being a mystery not known to former ages, who were so far from preaching to the Gentiles, that they looked upon them as aliens and outcasts, and thought it unlawful to converse or have any thing to do with them. Yea, this mystery was hidden from the very angels, as we read ver. 10 of this chapter; it was first revealed to St. Peter, Acts x. who preached to the Gentiles; for which he was blamed by the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the circumcision, as we read, Acts xi. And here in this chapter St. Paul tells us, it was revealed to him, who was made a minister

of this dispensation of the grace of God, to preach unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. This he did to these Ephesians, who were some of the Gentile converts to whom he was sent, and for so doing he was made a prisoner, and suffered great persecution; so he tells them, ver. 1, 'For this cause I Paul am made a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.' Now lest they should be discouraged by his troubles for their sakes, and fall back again to Judaism and circumcision by his bonds, he 'desires them here not to faint at his tribulation for them;' nor be any ways troubled at any thing that might befal him in their cause, which he tells them was 'their glory,' and therefore should be rather matter of glorying and rejoicing, than of sorrow and despondency to them, that God should raise up and commission him to instruct them in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and likewise to enable him to do and suffer any thing for their conversion and salvation; which is a cordial strong enough to keep them from fainting under his or their own afflictions. And having thus endeavoured to raise their spirits by this request to them, he proceeds,—

Secondly, To his prayers, and falling upon his knees for them; 'For this cause, (saith he,) I bow my knees unto the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you,' &c., where we may observe,—

1st, The cause or occasion of his praying for them; 'For this cause.'

2dly, The humble posture he used in his prayers; for this cause 'I bow my knees.'

3dly, The object to whom his prayer was directed; 'To the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' &c.

4thly, The subject-matter of his prayer, in the following part of this epistle.

1st, For the cause or occasion of his prayer, that is implied in the words, 'For this cause;' which relates to what went before, namely, to keep them from 'fainting at his tribulations for them;' that they might not stumble or be offended at the cross of Christ, which he and they might meet with in his cause; that they might neither faint nor fall away at any troubles that might happen to either. This was the occasion and opportunity he made use of to offer up his prayers in the behalf of these Ephesians; and gives us to understand, that in times of difficulty and trouble we are to put up our prayers for grace and strength to bear them. Afflictions and troubles are apt to sink the spirits, and our natural weakness is such, that without the divine succour we cannot stand upright; times of trouble are times of trial, and the faith of many hath failed in the furnace of affliction. We read of some, that in time of 'temptation fell away,' and 'when persecution arose, by reason of the Word, by and by they were offended.' And therefore we must, especially at such times, pray to be preserved

from impatience and apostasy, and to be 'kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' This is a proper season to make our requests known unto God, that we may be enabled to stand in the evil day, and be in nothing terrified by our adversaries, which will be our glory. This the apostle here did for the Ephesians, and we find him doing the same in the behalf of the Philippians; for he being then a prisoner at Rome, and fearing lest their faith should be shaken by his bonds, prays for them that they might 'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,' Phil. i. 27, 28. This was the cause or motive of the apostle's prayer, which may teach us to do the same upon the like occasion, viz. to pray for constancy and perseverance in times of persecution, that our faith be not shocked by our own or others' sufferings; and for this we have both a precept and a promise of encouragement from God himself, saying, 'Call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me,' Psal. l. 12. From the occasion of the apostle's prayer I proceed,—

2dly, To the humble posture used by him in it, and that was kneeling; for this cause 'I bow my knees.' This circumstance is here taken notice of, to recommend it to our imitation. St. Paul did not, as too many in our days do, sit at his prayers, or present his Maker with a rude, unmannerly devotion; no, he shewed more reverence, and bowed his knees before him. Sitting (we know) is a posture of ease and sloth, and betokens that freedom and familiarity which may well enough pass among equals, but is never used as a gesture of reverence or respect to superiors. We count it a great rudeness to sit in the presence of a great man, and never present a petition to a prince but upon our knees; and shall we show less reverence to God Almighty than we are wont to do to our fellow-creatures? The prophet Malachi brings in the Almighty upbraiding the irreverence of such as present him with the lame, and the blind, and other indecent sacrifices; bidding them 'go and offer it to their governors, and see whether they would accept their persons, or be pleased with such services.' Mal. i. 8. And shall we think that good enough for the great Majesty of heaven and earth, which would be reckoned an affront to earthly magistrates? If we consult the precepts and precedents of former times, we shall find the practice of good men in all ages to be kneeling, standing, or prostrating, but never sitting at their prayers. David calls upon all that will draw nigh to God, to 'worship and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.' Psal. xcv. 6. Accordingly we find king Solomon 'kneeling upon his knees before the altar of the Lord, and spreading up his hands to heaven.' 1 Kings viii. 54. And the same is affirmed of him in 2 Chron. vi. 13. Daniel is said to 'kneel upon his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as his custom was.' Dan. vi. 10. But lest any should think this only an Old Testament ceremony, we find in the gospel our

blessed Saviour 'upon his knees,' praying to his heavenly Father. Luke xxii. 41. And generally they that addressed to him for mercy 'kneeled down and prayed,' as we read Matt. xvii. 14, Mark i. 40. St. Stephen's prayer for his persecutors was 'upon his knees,' Acts vii. 60; and so was St. Peter's, Acts ix. 40. St. Paul here is 'bowing his knees unto God,' and elsewhere tells us, that 'at the name of Jesus,' which is mentioned in every prayer, 'every knee should bow.' Phil. ii. 10. It were endless to recite the many places to this purpose.

And now methinks so many precepts and examples for this humble posture of kneeling should teach us better manners than to sit at our prayers, especially considering, that the Church, whereof we are members, hath likewise required this lowly gesture from us; whereas that other of sitting hath no where any precept or precedent to countenance it.

Indeed the adorable greatness of the Divine Majesty is sufficient to check all manner of irreverence in our approaches to him, and a due sense of his infinite distance from us would oblige us to all humility of body and mind, and keep us from making too bold either in our words or gestures, when we address to him.

I have spoken the more of this, to convince you, if possible, of the evil and indecency of this practice, and to persuade you to greater reverence and humility in the house of God, 'who is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that draw nigh to him.' From the gesture used by the apostle in his prayer, I proceed,—

3dly, To the object to whom it was directed; and that was to the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:' 'for this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named.' Where the object of our prayers is described, not by the lofty style of 'God Almighty,' or 'the most High,' which is apt to make us dread and keep at a distance from him, but by the endearing title of 'Father,' to encourage us to draw nigh to him; and the 'Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,' who is thereby not only his son, but our Saviour and elder brother, to beget the greater trust and confidence in him by that near relation.

He then who sent his only-begotten Son to die for us, and he who hath begotten us again to a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead; he it is, to whom our prayers are to be directed: it is not to saints or angels, or the Virgin Mary, as the manner of some is, for which we have not the least direction or encouragement, they being but creatures like ourselves, and unable either to hear or help us. It is God only that 'heareth prayers,' and gives the return of them; and therefore 'to him alone must all flesh come.'

But though God the Father be the principal object of our prayers, yet God the Son is the Mediator, in whose name and

for whose merits we are to offer them up to him; and therefore our Church hath taught us to conclude all our prayers with the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ; 'of whom, (as the next words tell us,) the whole family of heaven and earth is named: where by the 'whole family of heaven and earth' is meant the whole Catholic Church, part whereof is triumphant in heaven, and part still militant here on earth; and this militant part here on earth, consisting of Jews and Gentiles, by the grace of the gospel incorporated into one family, are all called by the name of Christ, and from him styled Christians.

4thly, From the object pass we next to the subject-matter of the apostle's prayer, or what it was he asked in the behalf of these Ephesians. And that was first in general, for spiritual strength or grace to support them under their infirmities, and to carry them above temptations; that God would 'grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.' Where by the 'inner man' we are to understand the heart, mind or soul, as it is distinguished from the body, which is called the outward man; to 'be strengthened with might in it,' is to be furnished with inward power and ability to perform all holy duties, and to be fortified against all the assaults of our ghostly enemies. This inward strength is here said to be given by God's 'Holy Spirit,' the author and bestower of all grace, who 'according to the riches of his glory,' or the treasures of his abundant mercy, is alone able and willing to supply us upon all occasions, as our necessities shall require. So that the thing in general here prayed for, is such a firmness of mind, or such a stable frame of spirit, as might carry them with courage and constancy through all the stages of our christian course; being enabled to practise all those virtues that adorn our profession, and to avoid all those vices that tend to disparage and defeat the design of it. More particularly, he here prays,—

1st, For the grace of faith, in the next words, that 'Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith;' that is, that they might be so firmly built up in the knowledge and faith of Christ, that their hearts might become 'the habitation of God through the Spirit.' Eph. ii. 22. To dwell, you know, is to take up an abode with another, and implies continuance; not calling there as a stranger or traveller, but abiding as an inhabitant, and making it his place of residence. This our Saviour promised his disciples, that 'he and his Father would come unto them, and make their abode with them.' John xiv. 23. Now 'Christ's dwelling in the heart' is here said to be by the grace of faith; for that makes us adhere to him, and that will engage him to adhere and abide with us. This therefore the apostle prays for in the behalf of these Ephesians, that they might persevere in the truth, and continue steadfast in the faith; and that, not an idle, dead, and ineffectual faith, that is void of good works, for that profiteth nothing; but

such a lively, active, and operative faith, that hath its fruit unto holiness, and that will ripen and grow up into eternal life.

2dly, Another branch of his prayer for them was for the grace of love, and that too not in the outward show and flourish, but to be firmly 'rooted and grounded in it;' that it may be not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. Now the love here meant, is chiefly the love of God, that holy fire that is to be kindled in the heart, and still kept flaming in the breast; and by that we may be enabled in some measure to 'comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, the depth and height of the love of God towards us.' Not that we can take the infinite and unfathomable dimensions of the divine love, which exceed all that we can ask or think; but that we may arrive as far in it as our faculties will reach, and where they fail we are to admire and adore the unsearchable riches of it.

3dly, Another part of the apostle's prayer for these Ephesians, was the knowledge of God, that they might 'know the love of God, which passeth knowledge,' ver. 19; which words seem a paradox at the first hearing, that he should pray to 'know' that, which at the same time he declares to be such as 'passeth knowledge;' but the sense of it is, either that he begs to know that which surpasses all other knowledge whatsoever, for he counted the knowledge of all other things but 'loss and dung' in comparison of the 'excellency of the knowledge of Christ.' Phil. iii. 8. And therefore he told the Corinthians that he 'determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified,' 1 Cor. ii. 2; that is, nothing in competition with, or in opposition to it. Or, secondly, to know the love of God, which 'passeth knowledge,' signifies to know that which our natural powers cannot reach to the knowledge of, and is to be known only by the supernatural light of God's Holy Spirit. Or else, thirdly, to know the love of God, which passeth knowledge, is to know something of that which at present cannot be perfectly known by us. But whether we understand the words in all or either of these senses, this was a noble subject of the apostle's prayers, and will be always worthy of ours; for 'this is life eternal, (saith St. John,) to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.' John xvii. 3. Our future happiness will consist much in the knowledge of God, and therefore we should aim and aspire to it now, and labour to attain to as high a measure of it as we can. To complete which,

The apostle, in the last place, prays that these Ephesians 'might be filled with all the fulness of God;' not that it is possible to attain to the measure of the divine perfections, or arrive to the fulness of the Godhead; but that we should endeavour, as far as our capacities will reach, to be filled with the graces of the Spirit, and particularly with the knowledge and love of God, that we may be the better fitted to be filled with glory, which will consist in the perfection of these and all other graces: for they

who know and love God here, will be known and loved by him hereafter, and shall have the eternal fruition of his glorious Godhead.

These are the chief heads of St. Paul's prayer for these Ephesians, which he here concludes with that excellent doxology: 'Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.' Where the better to assure himself and them of the success of his petitions, he puts them in mind of the infinite power and goodness of God, who is both able and willing to give more than we can crave or conceive; that his returns will be far beyond our desires or deserts, and if we ask in faith, we need not fear exceeding in our requests, or asking too much of him: and therefore he would have us, according to our bounden duty, be ever ready to render him all the praise and glory of all his mercies.

This is the substance of this day's epistle, which contains the following useful and important lessons.

1. We may learn hence upon all occasions to make our requests known unto God, the author and fountain of all our mercies; but more especially in times of trouble and trial, when we stand in greatest need of his most gracious aid and assistance. And this we are here taught to do, not for ourselves only, but for all that we are any way related to, or concerned with, whose good we ought to have as tender a sense of as our own; for so we find the apostle had in all his epistles, giving those to whom he wrote to understand, that whether present or absent, he was always mindful of them in his prayers.

2. We learn hence, not to think the worse of any cause because it may sometimes meet with opposition and persecution; for so we find St. Paul and the other apostles did in propagating the gospel, though they had their commission from heaven for so doing: and therefore we should not faint or be dismayed at these things, whensoever we see or hear of them.

3. We are taught from hence, that patience and perseverance in times of trouble and persecution is wholly the gift of God, and consequently to him alone we are to address for it; for all the strength by which we stand is not ours, but his, and is to be sought from him. For this cause we find St. Paul praying here for himself and others; and 'if any man lack wisdom' or grace to persevere, 'let him ask it of God, who is willing to give liberally to all men, and upbraideth not.'

4. We learn hence, that all our addresses to this purpose must be made with all humility and reverence both of body and mind; for St. Paul here bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in praying for it; yea, the example of our Saviour, who kneeled down and prayed, the command of the apostle requiring every knee to bow to him, and the practice of Christians

in all ages, shews this to be the proper posture of devotion. We find no instance in sacred history of any holy man that ever sat at his prayers; this may teach us to avoid that irreverent and indevout practice, which by our unhappy divisions hath lately crept in among us; and to observe the Psalmist's call, to 'come and worship, and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker.'

5. We are directed here in the matter, as well as the manner of our prayers, and taught for what as well as how to ask; and that is, for spiritual strength to arm us against the power of temptation, and for grace to help in time of need. This the apostle thought necessary to do in the behalf of these Ephesians; and let us make this the platform of our devotion both for ourselves and others.

Lastly, From the doxology in the close, let us learn to all our prayers to add praises and thanksgivings unto God; adoring his power, extolling his goodness, admiring his wisdom, submitting to his will, and giving him the glory of all: so shall we engage the Divine Providence to take care of us, and keep us blameless to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXXXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE vii. 11—17. — *And it came to pass the day after, that Jesus went into a city called Nain, and many of his disciples went with him, and much people: and when he came nigh unto the city, behold there was a dead man carried out*, &c.

THIS gospel for the day gives us a relation of a certain miracle wrought by our Saviour upon a dead man, whom he raised to life again, in the view of many witnesses. Where the evangelist, in relating of it, takes notice,—

First, Of the circumstance of time when it was done, in these words, 'It came to pass the day after;' that is, the day after his healing the centurion's servant, which was done the day before, as the foregoing part of the chapter declares: where we read of a centurion or officer of the Roman band, that had a servant whom he dearly loved, who being very sick and ready to die, when he heard of Jesus, came himself, as St. Matthew relates it, or as St. Luke here, sent some of the elders of the Jews, beseeching him to come and heal his servant; which is in effect all one, for what a man does by another, is reckoned as done by himself. These besought him instantly, saying, he was worthy for whom he should do this, for the good offices he had done for their church and nation. Jesus going to him, was met by the way with this message: 'Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say the word only, and thy servant shall be healed;' believing him to have the

same power over diseases that he had over his soldiers, which was only to give the word of command, and it would be presently done. Christ perceiving his faith, marvelled and commended it, saying, 'He had not found so great faith, no not in Israel.' Whereupon they that were sent, returning to the house, 'found the servant whole that had been sick.' And then follow these words, 'And it came to pass the day after, that Jesus went into a city called Nain.' Which leads us,—

Secondly, From the circumstance of time to that of place, where this miracle of raising the dead man was performed; it was in the city of Nain, a city in Galilee, famous for little else than the presence of our Saviour, and this miracle there wrought by him; and it was enough to make any place remarkable in those days, where Christ or his apostles did any of their wonderful works. When Christ went to this city, it is said that many of his disciples went with him, and much people. His disciples attended him, of course, and the fame of his great works drew many more after him, who were all spectators and eye-witnesses of his miracles; for they were not done in a corner, where men may be easily imposed upon, but in the face of the sun, and in the sight of great multitudes. Accordingly, this was done here before much people, to satisfy them in the truth of the fact, and to confirm their faith in him. From the place and persons present, pass we,—

Thirdly, To the occasion or motive of Christ's working this miracle; and that was, his seeing some carrying a dead man to his grave, the mother and others following the corpse with weeping and sad lamentation. This is held forth in the next words: 'Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her.' This dead man was carried 'out of the city,' according to the custom of those days, which was to carry and bury dead corpses 'out of the city,' to preserve the inhabitants from the noisome air and scent of dead carcases.

The dead person that was carried out was the 'only son of his mother;' which you know is a matter of great grief and sorrow, especially to the tender bowels of a mother. The loss of a child, even where there are more left, is commonly attended with tears and great lamentation: nature itself suggests this to parents, to be sensibly touched and affected with the death of a child, having thereby lost a limb or part of themselves; but the loss of an only child is far more grievous and afflicting, being in effect the loss of all.

Moreover, to enhance the sorrow, it is added, 'And she was a widow.' It seems she had lost her husband before, and that was followed here with the loss of her only son; which was enough to overwhelm her with grief, and to drown her in tears of sorrow.

Again, it is said, 'And much people of the city was with her;' partly to comfort her in her great affliction, which is an office of great charity, to relieve the spirits of the afflicted under their deep mourning and sadness, and to bear off some of the burden, by lamenting and mourning with them; and partly likewise to attend the funeral, and to accompany the deceased party to the grave, his bed of rest; which is an act of piety and great civility, generally practised in all civilzied places and countries; which is done partly out of respect to the dead, and partly as a warning and example to the living, to let them know that they must all shortly follow him to the same place. But to proceed,—

'When our Lord saw her' in so much sorrow and sadness, bemoaning her desolate and disconsolate condition, bedewing her face with tears, and filling the air with sighs and outcries for the loss of her dear and only child, it is said, 'he had compassion on her.' His bowels yearned towards her, which shewed itself in pitying her sad and mournful state, and speaking kindly and comfortably to her. Where his carriage towards her teaches us to have compassion one of another in like cases, to sympathize in each other's afflictions, and to administer comfort and cordials suitable to all men's distresses. This we find our Saviour did on all occasions: he wept over Jerusalem, when he saw them obstinately refusing all the offers of their peace and welfare. He wept at the beholding the extreme grief and tears of Mary and Martha, for the death of their brother Lazarus. And here he shewed great pity and compassion at the distressed condition of this afflicted widow. St. Paul wills us to 'weep with them that weep,' as well as 'to rejoice with them that rejoice;' and to bear a share, as in the joys, so in the sorrows of one another. Rom. xii.

But our Saviour's compassion did not vent itself in tears only, but discovered itself in kind words, and kinder actions: 'He said unto her, Weep not;' that is, cease lamenting the loss of thy son, and be of good cheer; he that hath taken him from thee, is able to restore him, or give thee another. Therefore, wipe away thy tears, and take comfort; immoderate grief may hurt thyself, but cannot recall thy son: if thou put thy faith and trust in God, he will either repair thy loss in the same kind, or recompense it with greater gain. From such comfortable speeches, he proceeded to more cheering and reviving actions; which will lead us,—

Fourthly, To the miracle itself, and the manner of his performing it; which, as the next words declare, was on this wise: As they were carrying this dead man out of the city to the place of his burial, our Saviour being then nigh to the gate of the city, 'came' to them, 'and touched the bier;' the bearers the mean time standing still. And while his hand was on the bier, he uttered these words, saying, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.' Upon which, 'he that was dead immediately sat

up, and began to speak; and he delivered him to his mother.' Where we may observe,—

1st, The manner or means used in effecting this miracle. It was by a touch of the bier, and a word of his mouth; means no way proportioned to such an end, if they were not seconded by a Divine power, that is able to do all things. It is all one to Omnipotence, to work by any or no means; all things, whether living or dead, upon or under the earth, readily obey his call, and come forth at his word of command: if he say the word, the effect must and will come to pass, for nothing can hinder the influence of his power, or resist his will.

2dly, We may observe here the certainty of this miracle. That the dead man came to life again, was evident by the vital actions performed by him, for 'he sate up,' and 'began to speak;' things out of the power of a dead carcase; and all this in the sight of a great multitude, who were then doing the last office of carrying and waiting on him to his grave.

3dly, We may observe the kindness of our Saviour to the mournful mother, in these words: 'And he delivered him to his mother.' With what joy she received him at his hands, is a matter better to be imagined than expressed: how her heart leaped for joy, when she saw him sit up, and with what pleasing and greedy attention she hearkened unto him when he began to speak; how her passions were moved and heightened, no tongue can utter; and what exultation of spirit she felt within her, is out of the reach of words to declare. The death of her son had almost brought her to death's door, and his coming to life again, put in a manner a new life into her; she that was before overwhelmed with grief, now became transported with joy; and our Saviour's compassion for her former trouble was no doubt turned into a sympathy of rejoicing with her.

This is, in brief, the miracle here recorded in the gospel for this day, together with the many remarkable circumstances that attended it.

But what were the effects that followed after it? Why, that the next words declare. As,—

1st, 'There came a fear on them all.'

2dly, They all 'glorified God.'

3dly, They all said, that a new Prophet was risen up among them, and that God had visited his people. And,—

Lastly, That this rumour went of him throughout all Judea, and the regions round about.

1st, It is said that 'a fear came on them all.' But why so? One would think rather, that love should have seized them all upon the sight of so much goodness; and such a love, too, as should have cast out fear, and filled them with all manner of joy and rejoicing.

True, the goodness of his works no doubt possessed them with a great love of his person, but the greatness of his works struck

them with no small awe and dread of his power. They were surprised with wonder at what they saw, and were filled with astonishment at his great and marvellous works. This effect we find the miracles of Christ generally had upon the minds of the people, to seize them with amazement and terror. Upon his curing the deaf and dumb man, it is said the people 'were beyond measure astonished,' Mark vii. 37; and here, that 'fear came upon them all;' *i. e.* they were taken with a sudden affrightment at that Divine power, that was able to do such strange and wonderful works.

But yet, 2dly, their fear was not so great as to hinder their devotion; for the next words tell us, that 'they glorified God;' meaning, that the awe and dread with which they were struck at the sight of this miracle, put them upon praises and acknowledgments unto God of his infinite power and goodness, giving him all the glory of these marvellous and miraculous acts, and rendering all due thanks for the good and benefit they received by them. This is a tribute we owe for all the daily and common favours of Providence, but much more for these extraordinary and astonishing acts of his bounty; saying with the Psalmist, 'Unto thy name be all the glory;' and 'How excellent is thy name in all the world!'

3dly, The sight of this miracle done by our Saviour, moved all the people with one voice to say, that 'a great Prophet was risen up among them,' and 'that God had visited his people.' That a great Prophet was to come, they learnt from the prophecy revealed to Moses, Deut. xviii. 18, 'A Prophet shall the Lord thy God raise up like unto thee, and to him they shall hearken;' which is quoted by the apostle, Acts iii. 22, and vii. 37. That this Prophet should come with a power of working miracles, such as raising the dead, and healing all manner of diseases, they had learnt from the other prophets; and that the time of his coming was then at hand, they concluded from sundry prophecies to that purpose.

Now, when Christ came doing such great and wonderful works, and shewing himself a Prophet so 'mighty in word and deed,' some said, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.' John i. 45. Others said, 'Of a truth this is that Prophet that should come into the world.' John vi. 14. And these in our text, 'that a great Prophet is risen up among us.' This they gathered partly from the excellency of his doctrine, 'for no man (say they) ever spake like him;' and partly from the greatness of his works, 'for no man (say others) ever did the works that he doth.' And being thus mighty in word and deed, they well enough concluded from both, that this was that Prophet, or promised Messiah, that was to come for the revealing of God's will, and the redemption of mankind; by both which God is here said 'to have visited his people;' that is, he hath sent one in our own nature to pity our condition, to

relieve our wants, and to visit us with his salvation; which made Zachariah fall a 'blessing of God,' for thus 'visiting and redeeming his people,' and 'raising up a horn of salvation for them, out of the house of his servant David.' Luke i. 68, &c. The fame as well as the benefit of it is gone abroad into the world. And this will lead us to the

Last thing recorded of this miracle; and that is, that 'this rumour of him went forth throughout all Judea, and all the regions round about.' The fame of his miracles, and the testimony they gave to the truth of his Messiahship, spread into all parts, insomuch that all Galilee, and the cities of Judea and Palestine, and all the circumambient regions round about them, received the report of him: which drew many to see and partake of the benefit of his miracles, and thereby become proselytes and converts to his doctrine.

Thus we see the miracle here related in all its circumstances and effects, the greatest indeed of all miracles, which is the raising of a dead person to life, the sole work of a Divine power and goodness. It remains only to infer a few practical lessons from the whole. And,

1st, From Christ's readiness to go from the centurion's servant at Jerusalem, to the widow's son at Nain, we may learn not to omit any opportunities of doing good to the bodies or souls of men. We see here how forward and solicitous our Saviour was about both, making no scruples or delays in serving of either; but cheerfully embracing all opportunities of contributing to their bodily health, and promoting their eternal welfare. He sooner wanted objects, than will to shew kindness; and nothing pleased him better, than to find men to have faith enough to come to him, and to be healed by him. This was the business, the recreation, and the whole employment of our blessed Lord; and nothing renders us more like unto him, than a desire and delight in doing good in the best way and manner that we are able.

2dly, From our Saviour's compassionating and comforting the disconsolate widow upon the death of her dear and only son, we may learn to commiserate and condole with each other upon the loss of friends and relations, and to bear a part as well in the sorrows as joys of one another. We are apt and forward enough to share in the comforts and prosperity of others, and to 'rejoice with them that rejoice;' but are commonly too shy and backward in pitying or partaking in their troubles and misfortunes, and 'to weep with them that weep.' The one gratifies the corruption, but the other tends more to the perfection of our nature; and our Saviour's example here directs us as much or more to the latter than the former, for we often read that he wept and shed tears, but never that he laughed, or indulged himself in too much mirth.

3dly, From the miracle here wrought in raising the widow's dead child to life again, we may learn farther to confirm our faith

in him, and to take him for the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, for the mighty works that were done by him, which nothing less than a Divine power and goodness were able to effect. Miracles are the broad seal of Heaven, which is never set to any commission but what comes from God; which made Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, say to our Saviour, 'I know that thou art a teacher come from God, for none can do the works that thou dost, except God were with him.' John iii. 1, 2. These miracles abundantly testify his mission, that his doctrine is divine, and contains the words of eternal life, and that his precepts are the best, the wisest, and the safest rules to lead us to it; and therefore, it must be not only our duty, but our wisdom and truest interest to receive the one, and to obey the other.

4thly, From the fear that fell on the people at the sight of this miracle, we may learn to 'fear the Lord and his goodness,' as it was promised and prophesied of the latter days. Hosea iii. 5. Let us fear to offend so great and so good a God, who is able to do such great things for our happiness or our destruction. Such was the fear of these in this gospel, a fear of astonishment, that set them a wondering at the greatness of his power; not a fear of desperation, to make them distrust his goodness: for we find their fear did not drive them from, but to him; it led them to the admiring and adoring his infinite power, and instead of falling away, they fell to glorifying of God. From whence we may learn,

5thly, To give God the glory of all his mercies; not ascribing any thing to ourselves, to our own power or merits, but acknowledging our weakness and worthlessness, and adoring his power and goodness in all the ordinary and extraordinary acts of his providence towards us.

6thly, From their unanimous owning this great Prophet to be risen up among them, let us learn to do likewise, and to bless God for thus visiting us with his salvation.

Lastly, From the rumour that went of him throughout all the country and regions round about, let us learn to publish his honour, and to spread the fame of his miracles and good works to mankind.

Upon the whole, let us take heed of an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the truths of the gospel revealed to us. Remember the fate of Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, who for not believing in Christ, when they heard his doctrine and saw his miracles, were sentenced to a more heavy and intolerable doom than Tyre and Sidon, and other barbarous nations, where the sound of these things never came: and better would it be for us not to have known the ways of righteousness, than having known them, to depart from the holy commandment. In a word, therefore, let us all say with him in the gospel, and say it heartily, 'Lord, I believe: help my unbelief.'

DISCOURSE CCXXXIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EPHES. iv. 1—7.—*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called into one hope of your calling,* &c.

WE are taught to pray, in the collect for this day, that the grace of God may always prevent and follow us, and make us to be continually given to all good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To this end,

St. Paul, then a prisoner at Rome for the cause of Christ, makes mention, in the epistle for this day, of some of those graces and good works, that we are continually to follow and be given to; beginning in the first verse with a general exhortation to these Ephesians, and in them to all Christians, 'to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called.' Where by the 'vocation wherewith they were called,' is meant the christian profession, by which they were called out of their former heathen state to a state of Christianity; that is, to become Christians, and to embrace the christian faith revealed to them by the gospel.

To 'walk worthy of this vocation,' is to lead holy lives suitable to the commands and obligations it lays upon us. So St. Peter expounds it, 'That as He which hath called us is holy, so we should be holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy, for I am holy.' 1 Peter i. 15, 16. From this general exhortation he proceeds to some of those particular graces, which we pray may always prevent and follow us, to wit, that our good works may be done,

1st, 'With all lowliness;' that is, with a humble and lowly opinion of ourselves, free from all pride, vanity, and loftiness of spirit.

2dly, 'With all meekness;' that is, with all mildness and gentleness of behaviour towards others, free from all passion, prejudice, or partiality.

3dly, 'With long-suffering;' that is, with a patient bearing of lesser wrongs and injuries, free from sudden rage or thoughts of revenge.

4thly, 'With forbearing one another in love;' that is, bearing with the infirmities, and hiding the indiscretions of each other, free from all censuring, detraction, and backbiting. These are some of the principal graces and virtues, that answer and adorn our christian profession; and they that live in the practice of them, may be truly said to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.'

But the chiefest virtue here prescribed and insisted on for that purpose, is the living together in 'unity and peace,' as becometh good Christians and good subjects. To this we are directed in the next words, 'Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' The unity of the Spirit is that to which we are called, and by which we are united by the Holy Spirit. It is often expressed and illustrated in Scripture by the union that is between the body and the soul; that as all the members of the natural body are joined together and united by one soul, so all the members of Christ's mystical body the Church are united and animated by one spirit, called therefore the unity of the Spirit. And this is to be 'kept in the bond of peace;' that is, by one fellowship, discipline, and communion, which serves to join all the parts and members of Christ's body, as a bond is wont to tie and fasten things together. So that the sense of the exhortation is, that all Christians should labour to live peaceably together in the unity of the Church, without dissension and separation, and to preserve the bond of charity and christian communion, with which the Holy Spirit hath joined all Christians together. This is here and in sundry other places of Scripture strictly charged and pressed upon us, as a good means to 'walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called:' for unity and peace will recommend our profession to its greatest enemies, whereas discord and dissension mightily expose and disparage it; and therefore the former are to be kept entire and inviolate, and the latter to be shunned and avoided by all good Christians.

For this reason, our Saviour's last prayer in the behalf of his disciples, was, 'That they all might be one, as He and his Father were one, that the world might believe that God had sent him:' which they will sooner do, by seeing his followers live in love and unity together, than by observing them to clash and separate from one another. And therefore St. Paul earnestly pressed the Philippians, to 'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.' Phil. i. 27. And here he gives the same charge to the Ephesians, to 'keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.'

But the better to enforce this unity upon them and us, the apostle here adds many weighty arguments to engage us to the love and practice of it; and these take up the remaining part of this day's epistle. As,

1st, He tells us in the next verse, that 'there is but one body:' meaning, that there is but one christian catholic Church, which is in Scripture frequently called 'the body of Christ; for as we have many members in one body (saith the apostle) and all the members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ.' Rom. xii. 4, 5. Though there be many congregations meeting in several places for the convenience of worship and discipline, yet the Church of Christ is but one all the world over. It was at first confined to Judea, the Jews having a partition

wall to separate and distinguish them from all other nations, who were excluded from the privileges of the temple; but it is since enlarged to all the world, the gospel being ordered to be preached to all nations, who may now 'see the salvation of God.'

Now this addition hath made the body bigger, but not multiplied it into more; for it is still one and the same body, though grown and extended into larger dimensions: as a person is the same when arrived to the stature of a man, as he was under the lesser dimensions of childhood or youth. So that the members of the Church being joined by the same worship, discipline, and communion, which are as it were the nerves and sinews to hold them together, make up but one mystical body of Christ, as the several parts and members joined together make up but one natural body.

Neither do the distant places of meeting break the unity of the Church, whilst they all join in one communion, no more than the different situation and offices of the several members do destroy the unity of the natural body. Indeed, all the members of Christ's Church should, if it might be, meet in one place, that with one mind and one mouth they might all glorify God together: but that being impossible, by reason of the distance of habitations and countries, care is to be taken, that they join in what they may, viz., in the doctrine, discipline, and communion of the Church; and that will unite them into one mystical body, and make them what the apostle here and elsewhere affirms, to be 'all one in Christ Jesus.'

2dly, It is farther said, that as there is but one body, so there is one Spirit to animate and enliven it. Though the evil spirits are many, and wicked men are haunted by legions of them, yet the good Spirit of God, by which good men are acted, is but one. This is to the Church as the soul is to the body, the life, vigour, and activity of it: and as one body can have but one soul to quicken it, so the mystical body of Christ hath but one Spirit to animate and actuate it. This is the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' which we are bid to keep to and preserve, by loving and living peaceably in one fellowship and communion with one another; that as one soul actuates all the members of the body, and thereby keeps a harmony and sympathy with every part, so this one Spirit influences all the members of the Church to preserve the bond of mutual love and peace with each other: which is a good argument to persuade Christians to unite in their desires and devotion. To which end we are here minded,—

3dly, That 'we are all called into one hope of our calling;' meaning, that though there are different callings as to the affairs of this world, suitable to the different wants and necessities of human life, yet the calling or profession of Christianity is but one, suited to the nature and necessities of the soul. And though men may have different desires and designs in relation

to this life, yet they are all called into one hope of their christian calling, to wit, a future and eternal life. And this is another good motive to preserve unity, and prevent divisions; for all Christians having the same work to do, and expecting the same wages when done, having all the same spiritual wants here, and hoping for the same reward hereafter, it is absurd to differ and fall out in the way to it, and highly reasonable that we should join hand in hand together, for the mutual aid and assistance of one another; especially considering, that there is nothing but perfect unity and harmony in heaven, to which we are all making; there is no discord or dissension there; and if ever we hope to arrive thither, we must be fitted for it by peace and love with each other. For the happiness of that place consists much in these things; and if we are not disposed to them here, we are not qualified to be received into them hereafter; and therefore we must lay aside all hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, and the like, which are the dispositions of hell; and follow peace, love, amity, humility, and concord, which are the qualifications that can alone prepare us for heaven.

4thly, To persuade to this unity, the apostle farther tells us, 'that there is but one God;' meaning, that there is but one supreme Head and Governor of the christian Church, even Christ, the sole author and founder of it. He hath not subjected it to many masters to lord it over God's heritage, nor made his Church a monster of many heads, to expose it to disorder and divisions; but to us there is but one Lord, who hath subjected it to himself, and united it into a spiritual society under subordinate rulers and teachers of his own appointing; for 'he gave first apostles, secondarily prophets, then pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, and edifying the body of Christ.' After which, he commissioned the apostles to send others, as he had sent them, to teach and govern his Church, willing them to watch over their particular flocks, of 'which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers;' and likewise laying a charge on all Christians, to 'obey them that had the rule over them in the Lord, because they watch for their souls.' So that the apostle's affirming there is but one Lord, signifies, that as the Church is one, so there is but one discipline or government erected in it under Christ the head, and the bishops and pastors as his subordinate officers. And to live in obedience to them, is to preserve the 'unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;' but to cast off or depart from this discipline, is to create schisms in the Church, and to raise rebellion against the authority of Christ. In short, the argument taken from one Lord is very strong for the union and good agreement of all that are subjected to him, to live by his laws as so many menial servants in one family, and not to fall out about any rule or government among themselves.

5thly, To keep this unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the apostle farther adds, that there is but 'one faith;' meaning, that all the great and necessary points of religion are summed up for us in one creed, which we all profess to 'believe,' and are required to 'hold fast.' And this unity of faith is a sufficient foundation for a unity of heart and mind; for since we agree in the main, why should we differ about small matters? and whilst we hold the head, which is Christ, and the foundation, which is the christian faith, no needless questions or nice disputes should break the peace and unity of the Church. To preserve which, he tells us,—

6thly, That there is but 'one baptism;' that is, there is but one door of entrance into the christian Church, by which we are all admitted to the benefits and privileges of it; and it is by this door, too, that we must enter into the kingdom of heaven: for our Saviour hath told us more than once, that 'except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' John iii. 3, 5. And as there is but one baptism to receive us all into the Church, so there is but one communion to confirm us in it, and to convey to us the mercies and benefits of it; for 'we being many (saith the apostle) are one bread, and are all partakers of that one bread.' 1 Cor. x. 17. And elsewhere the same apostle puts both these together, saying, 'By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, and are all made to drink into one Spirit.' 1 Cor. xii. 13. Seeing, then, we all enter into the Church by the same gate, and walk to heaven the same way, let us not scatter or divide, but keep together for the mutual aid and comfort of each other; and, being joined together by the holy sacraments, the seals of the Holy Spirit, let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. To which end,—

Lastly, We are here told, that 'there is but one God and Father of all, who is above all,' by his power, 'and through all,' by his providence, 'and in all,' by his presence: and having but one object of divine worship, viz., the Omnipotent Maker and Master of us all, we are to unite and agree in his service, and adore him with one heart and one consent. This is the highest motive and example of unity, taken from the unity of the Godhead, which our Saviour's prayer sets as a pattern of union among believers, 'that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, so they also may be one in us.' John xvii. 20, 21. The heathens, indeed, had 'lords many and gods many,' and it could be no wonder if they were divided in serving of them; but 'to us there is but one Lord and one God,' to whom, therefore, we should all pay our joint and unanimous devotions.

Thus I have briefly considered the portion of Scripture appointed for the epistle for this day, which contains many weighty and cogent arguments for unity of heart and mind among

Christians; yea, it shews all our religion to be founded upon unity, and is only promoted by it; for we are all united in one 'mystical body' of Christ's Church. And this body is acted and animated by 'one Holy Spirit;' there is one door of entrance into it, *i. e.* by 'one baptism;' there is but 'one faith' professed in it; and, in a word, there is but one object of all divine worship, viz., the 'one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all.' From all which we learn,—

1. The nature and sinfulness of schism, which is the dividing of the body of Christ, and making it not one body, but many. 'Is Christ divided?' saith the apostle to the Corinthians, upon their breaking into schisms and factions; implying, that these things not only divide Christians, but Christ himself, by tearing in pieces his body the Church; and therefore the same apostle advises, that 'there be no schism in the body,' nor 'any divisions among Christians.' 1 Cor. i. 10. 'We being many (saith he) are one bread and one body, and are all partakers of one bread;' signifying, that by breaking communion, and setting up altar against altar, we break the unity of Christ's Church, and make a schism in his body; for thereby one member is rent and torn from another: and as a member cut off is no longer a part of the body from which it is severed, so they who cut themselves off from the communion of the Church by a wilful and causeless separation, are no longer members of Christ's body.

Indeed, there may and must be a local separation, because all the members of the catholic Church being dispersed into several parts of the world, cannot meet together in one place, and in a national Church. The members, by reason of their distance from one another, require distinct places or parishes for their meeting or assembling together; but there must be no separation in point of worship, no opposite communion or discipline, no conventicles or house-worship in opposition to the established worship of the temple or house of God; for these are plain divisions, and unwarrantable separations from the Church of Christ. For as the severing or dividing one limb from another makes a schism in the natural body, by destroying the union, and cutting off the communication of the several parts; even so the dividing of the members of the Church by different communions from one another, makes a schism in the mystical body of Christ; in which case the divided parts are cut off from the Head, and hindered from receiving grace or spiritual strength from him: which shews the danger as well as the sin of schism, a lesson to be learnt from the unity of the body.

2. From the unity of the Spirit and the fruits of it, we may learn what spirit we are of, and how far we are acted by it; for the Spirit of God is a spirit of love, peace, lowliness, meekness, patience, and the like: these tend to promote unity of heart and mind among men, and dispose them to agree and join together in the worship of God. But the evil spirit lusteth to envy,

strife, variance and contention; and these kindle a bitter zeal and emulation among Christians, which lead them into division and separation. Try yourselves, then, by this touchstone, and you may see whether the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If you are meek, humble, and modest, willing to learn of your teachers, to obey your superiors, to unite and agree with your neighbours, you are then acted by the good Spirit of God, which is known by these fruits; but if you are proud, arrogant, and untractable, unwilling to submit or be taught by your betters; if you are censorious, false, and unjust to one another, be not deceived, you are not moved to these things by the Holy Spirit of God, but by the evil spirit that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. In short, the good Spirit is but one, though the evil spirits are many; the former guides into the ways of truth and peace, the latter into the paths of error and dissension.

3. From the unity of faith, and the one hope of our christian calling, we may learn to unite and go hand in hand together in it, without differing or falling out about inferior matters; for whilst we adhere and hold to the same faith, and expect the same end of it, even the salvation of our souls, no lesser things can justify a contention, or much less warrant a separation. We are bid to contend earnestly for the faith, and to continue steadfast in the profession of it; but for the lesser matters of order and decency, we are bid to submit, and shew all lawful compliance, which is absolutely necessary to preserve unity.

4. From the one Lord, or the unity of the head, we may easily learn this compliance; for the head is the seat of wisdom and power, to direct and command the other members; and this may, in the most eminent manner, be affirmed of this mystical Head, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and who hath the sole right to guide and govern his whole body. Beside, as the head conveys down animal spirits, heat, and vigour to the other members, by which they live, move, and have their being; so Christ, the mystical head of the Church, sends down the kindly influences of his grace and Holy Spirit upon his members, to quicken and excite all their operations: which may teach us to live, to unite, and to abide in his body; for as the branches cannot live or bring forth any fruit, except they abide in the vine; so neither can we, except we are united to and abide in him.

5. From the unity of the sacraments, let us learn to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for these are as the ligaments and arteries to hold all the parts together. It is by one baptism that we are all initiated into Christ's Church, and by one communion that we are all confirmed and continued in it: so vain and foolish are they who think they belong to Christ, without the initiating ordinance of baptism; and so profane and presumptuous are all such as expect any benefit from him, without the confirming ordinance of the Holy Communion. These are

the seals of the new covenant, without which we can lay no claim to the title or privileges of Christians.

Lastly, From the one God and Father of all, let us be persuaded with one mind and one mouth to glorify our great Creator; so shall we, by preserving peace and unity on earth, arrive at last to the unity of the Church in heaven, and 'come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:' to which, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the merits of his Son, and our ever-blessed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXXXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

LUKE xiv. 1—11.—*It came to pass as Jesus went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees, to eat bread on the Sabbath-day, that they watched him. And behold there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy*, &c.

IN this gospel for the day, there are four observable things to be considered and spoken to: and they are,—

First, Our Saviour's freedom of conversation; 'He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread;' together with the circumstance of time when it was; it was 'on the Sabbath-day.'

Secondly, The insidious falsehood and treachery of the Pharisees in entertaining him; instead of welcoming, they only 'watched him,' to find some occasion to traduce and accuse him.

Thirdly, Our Saviour's great wisdom in putting them to silence, and thereby preventing and frustrating their wicked purpose.

Fourthly, Our Saviour's checking their pride and vanity, in affecting precedence and pre-eminence above others. These things contain the substance of this gospel, and must, therefore, be the subject of the following discourse.

And, First, Of the freedom of his conversation, 'He went into the house of one of the Pharisees to eat bread.' Whether he went in upon an invitation, or only made an accidental or occasional visit, is not here expressed, nor is it much material to inquire: we find him, as opportunity offered, ready enough to do both. When St. Matthew, a Publican, invited him to a feast, he freely went, and entertained the company with discourse that far exceeded all the other entertainment. In his passing through Jericho he saw Zaccheus, another Publican, climbing a sycamore tree, with a desire to see him: Jesus, looking up and seeing him, said unto him, 'Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house;' who immediately hastened and came down, and 'received him joyfully;' and well he might, for he 'brought salvation with him.' Luke xix. 5, 6, 9.

The Pharisees, indeed, blamed this freedom, saying to his disciples, 'Why eateth and drinketh thy Master with Publicans and sinners?' They thought it unbecoming so divine and holy a person as Jesus appeared to be, to converse so familiarly with the worst of men; for so they took the Publicans to be. But Christ, knowing their hearts, replied to them, 'The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick;' meaning, that they who were sound and holy in their own opinion, had not so much need of his company, as they that found themselves sick, and laboured under their infirmities; for 'he came not to call the righteous,' that is, such as were so in their own eyes, 'but sinners to repentance;' that is, such as were sensible of their sins, and felt the burden of their iniquities. This was the design of his coming and conversing in the world, to take men off from the love and practice of sin, and to reduce them to a better state and course of life. And this is more easily done upon modest and humble sinners, than upon those that are proudly conceited of their own righteousness. And therefore, the Pharisees might as well blame the physician of the body, for visiting hospitals and sick patients, as the great Physician of the soul, for visiting such as laboured under worse distempers. However, our Saviour did not wholly decline the civil society of these proud precisians, for we read here that he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread; he joined with them in the common actions of human life, though he had little hopes of bringing them to a better; for they were his greatest enemies, and opposed all his designs of good, both to themselves and others. They kept a distance from others, as men of the earth, and not worthy of the conversation of such heavenly persons as they. Now our Saviour sought, both by his discourse and example, to cure this supercilious and disdainful carriage, and to render them more affable, courteous, and condescending to other men. There was nothing sour, morose, or crabbed in him; but he was marvellously free and conversable with all mankind, and would have them be so too.

But this incorrigible sect, instead of mending their own faults, endeavoured to find all the faults they could in him. To that end, our Saviour coming on the Sabbath-day to the house of this chief Pharisee, one of the best quality, and a ruler among them, it is said, 'they watched him,' and sought to take all advantages against him. And this will lead me to the

Second thing propounded, viz., the insidious and treacherous carriage of these Pharisees towards him; who, contrary to all the laws of hospitality, instead of welcoming, watched all opportunities against him.

This was generally the practice and behaviour of the lawyers and Pharisees towards him; for sometimes they came to him on purpose to 'tempt and entangle him in his talk,' as we read, Luke x. 25. At other times, they came to him with glozing

and flattering speeches, as in the case of tribute-money, saying, 'Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither regardest the person of any man; tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou, Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cesar or not?' Which question proceeded not from any sincere desire of being informed in the truth of the matter, but merely to expose him to the rage either of the Jews or the Romans; which made him, knowing their wickedness, say, 'Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' Matt. xxii. 16, 17, &c. And here this chief Pharisee, and those about him, watched all our Saviour's words and actions, only to find something wherewith to charge and accuse him. Indeed, some men's talk and conversation are no better than gins and traps, designed not so much to please or inform, as to ensnare and entangle those they converse with. And such was that of the Pharisee in the text, who, upon Christ's coming to him on the Sabbath-day, hoped to find him saying or doing something in derogation of the honour of that day, which they held in great estimation: accordingly, an object being then presented before him, of a certain man who had the dropsy, they concluded that that might administer some matter of accusation against him, which our Saviour wisely foresaw and prevented: and that will lead us to the next thing here to be considered, viz.—

Thirdly, Christ's great wisdom in putting them to silence, and thereby defeating their wicked designs. The advantage they thought to take against him, was about his curing this sick man on the Sabbath-day; for the Jews, and especially the Pharisees, were strict and superstitious observers of that day, in which they would do no manner of work, no not the common offices of humanity and charity; yea, they abstained from the ordinary and necessary actions of human life; for they would scarce eat or drink, or defend themselves, if set upon on that day, which made them twice a prey to their enemies; once to Antiochus, and another time to Pompey. They blamed the disciples for plucking a few ears of corn on the Sabbath-day, though warranted by necessity, and the exigence of a great hunger, as we read, Matt. xii. They accused our Saviour for curing one that had a withered hand on that day, and sought to destroy him, as we read in the same chapter. St. Luke tells us, that the ruler of the synagogue was moved with great indignation against him for healing a woman on that day, who laboured under 'a spirit of infirmity eighteen years;' saying to the people, 'There are six days in which men ought to work; on them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath-day.' Luke xiii. 11, &c.

And here the chief Pharisee, in the text, watched whether he would heal this sick man of his dropsy on that day, that they might have wherewith to accuse him. But Christ knew their hearts, and was able to frustrate their design, and therefore he began with them, putting the question to him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?' St. Mark puts the question farther,

'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day, or to do evil; to save life, or to kill?' Mark iii. 4; that is, Is it not much better to do good, and to save life by healing, than to do evil, and to kill, by neglecting it on that day? To which they answered nothing, but 'held their peace;' and finding that they had nothing to say against it, 'he took him, and healed him, and let him go.'

But, for their farther satisfaction, he moved another question to them, saying, 'Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath-day?' St. Matthew puts the case even in the smallest matters, saying, 'What man is there among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath-day, will he not lay hold of it, and lift it out? How much, then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath-day.' Matt. xii. To which St. Luke here adds, 'And they could not answer him again to these things.'

Thus did our Saviour put these lawyers and Pharisees to shame and silence, as he did him who, merely to tempt him, asked which was the great commandment in the law; and those, that to entangle him would know whether it were lawful to pay tribute to Cesar: to all which he gave such answers as struck them dumb, and made them ask no more questions. For, as St. Luke tells us, 'All his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.' Luke xiii. 17.

Moreover, our Saviour being at a feast in this chief Pharisee's house, and observing how desirous the lawyers and Pharisees were to take place, and to have the precedence at the feast, he put forth a parable to them; which brings me to the last thing propounded, viz.—

Fourthly, Our Saviour's checking their pride and vanity, in affecting precedence and pre-eminence above others. This vanity he chastiseth here by a parable, which he put forth to them that were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them, 'When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room: but when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher; then shalt thou have worship with them that sit at meat with thee.' In which parable he reprehends the ambition and folly of such as strive for pre-eminence, and seek to exalt themselves above their brethren; shewing it to be much more decent and honourable for a man to set himself below, than above his place; that humility was the best step to honour, and that pride leads only to debasement. Christ had observed before of the Scribes and Pharisees, that they 'loved the uppermost rooms at feasts,

and the chief seats in the synagogues;' that they affected 'greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, rabbi,' Matt. xxiii. 6, 7; which made him, upon all occasions, seek to humble their pride, and to check their vanity. And we may observe some in our days, much like the Pharisees in this respect, affecting to be somebody this way, and too much courting preeminence; endeavouring to depress others to advance themselves, and to raise their own reputation upon the ruin of their betters. Yea, we find something of this among Christ's own disciples; for we read, that 'there was a strife among them, which of them should be the greatest.' To put a stop to this vain contention, our Saviour tells them, that though such contests may be found among the kings and great men of the earth, yet it shall not be so among you; 'but let him that is greatest among you, be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve;' urging upon them his own example: 'For whether is greater (saith he) he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.' Luke xxii. 24, 25, &c. And if he was so far from courting greatness, that he chose and preferred meanness before it, can it become us to strive who shall be greatest? When he took upon him the form of a servant, and did the meanest offices of such, shall we take upon us, and covet to be called masters? This is not to learn of our Saviour, to be meek and lowly in heart, but to learn of Lucifer, to be proud and lofty in spirit.

In short, this haughtiness of spirit is here sharply reprehended, and the contrary virtue of humility as highly recommended to us in this parable; both which are backed with two strong arguments in the close: 'For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;' that is, he that affecteth the higher rooms shall be brought low, and he that taketh the lower seats shall be advanced higher. An assuming boldness and arrogance in talk or behaviour is commonly odious and fulsome in the sight of all men; and none rise higher in the opinion of God and man, than they who are lowest in their own.

This is briefly the sum of the gospel for this day; which may serve to instruct us in the following lessons: as,—

1st, From our Saviour's freedom of conversation we may learn to be affable, courteous, and condescending to all men; this Christ's command and example plainly teach us: 'Learn of me, (saith he) for I am meek and lowly in heart.' It is no part of his religion to be sour, morose, or cynical; for he conversed familiarly with all sorts of men, and hath willed his disciples to do so too. The Pharisees, indeed, were supercilious and austere, keeping a distance from others as unworthy of their company, and saying, 'Stand off, come not nigh me, for I am holier than thou;' and their modern followers have something of the same moroseness, separating from others as sinners, and fearing to be

defiled by their unholy conversation: but our Saviour's practice and advice was quite otherwise; for he freely ate and drank with publicans and sinners, and hath willed us to be courteous and kindly affectioned to all men. We are, indeed, to shun the vices, but not the persons of bad men; we are to avoid the contagion of their example, but not to deny them the civility of our society. Nabal, for his churlishness, was styled one of the sons of Belial: and to stand at a morose distance from other men, is rather the guise of a proud Pharisee, than the practice of a good Christian.

2dly, From the Pharisees' watching our Saviour to ensnare and entrap him, we learn the evil effects of malice and hypocrisy, what a pernicious influence they have upon conversation, and how they poison and embitter all society. We read of some that watch for our halting, and seek occasion against us; yea, lay traps in our way on purpose to catch or make us fall. Our Saviour found this dealing from the world, and the disciple is not above his Lord: 'Marvel not (saith he) if the world hate you, for they hated me before they hated you.' Malice studies to undermine and to do harm, and will not suffer men to sleep till they have done mischief: hypocrisy seeks to cover such malicious designs with flattering speeches, and to put fair colours upon the foulest actions. The world abounds with such treacherous and dangerous enemies; which may teach us to be as watchful to avoid as they are to do mischief.

3dly, From Christ's defeating the malicious designs of the Pharisee, in watching of him, we may learn to walk warily and circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, and to arm ourselves against the wiles of the wicked. When Christ sent his disciples abroad into the world, he told them, 'Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves;' that is, among wicked and ungodly men, who will be apt to worry and lie in wait for you, as the ravening wolves do for the innocent sheep: therefore (saith he) 'be ye wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' A serpent, you know, hath many ways to secure and defend himself from danger: it hath many windings and turnings to that purpose, and can encircle itself into a narrow compass, the better to avoid being hit or receiving harm. Which things may teach us to use all good means to escape the treachery and malice of designing men; but yet to the wisdom of the serpent we are to add the harmlessness of the dove; *i. e.* to use nothing but good and lawful means to that end, and not betake ourselves to sinister and indirect courses to promote our safety. The dove, you know, is an innocent creature, void of gall, that often takes, but never does any harm; which we should therefore imitate in the innocence of our ways and behaviour. Our Saviour silenced and secured himself from those that watched him, and sought by tempting to bring him into danger. In like manner we should cut off all occasion from them, that seek occasion against us, that they who

watch for our halting may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say against us.

Lastly, From our Saviour's checking the Pharisees for their affecting precedence and pre-eminence, we may learn to cast off all pride, and to be clothed with humility: for God and man 'resist the proud,' and pull down such as are lifted up: but both conspire to 'give grace and favour to the humble.' 'He putteth down the mighty from their seats' (saith the blessed Virgin); that is, from those upper rooms, and higher seats, to which their pride had mounted them; 'and exalteth the humble and meek;' that is, such as they seek to depress and despise. Wherefore, let us strive not so much to be great as good, and labour more for lowliness than haughtiness of mind; and by thus humbling ourselves, God shall exalt us in due time. Which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXXXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

1 Cor. i. 4—8.—*I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ*, &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to beseech God for grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with pure hearts and minds to follow him, the only true God.

Suitable hereunto, the epistle for this day contains St. Paul's thanksgiving unto God, for giving this grace unto the Corinthians, together with the many blessed fruits and effects that proceeded from it: 'I thank my God always on your behalf,' &c. Where we may observe,

First, The great duty of thankfulness, 'I thank my God.'

Secondly, The time when this duty is to be performed; and that is 'always.'

Thirdly, The persons for whom this is here done; and that is, for the Corinthians: 'I thank my God always on your behalf.'

Fourthly, The subject-matter of his thanksgiving; and that is, 'for the grace of God given unto them by Jesus Christ.' And,

Lastly, The blessed fruits and effects of this Divine grace, in the following part of this epistle. Of each of these particularly. And,

First, I must begin this discourse, as St. Paul here does this epistle with the great duty of thankfulness, 'I thank my God.' There being no better way to derive the blessings of heaven upon us, than by the channel of a thankful heart; and nothing more stops the current of future favours, than unthankfulness for former. Now thankfulness in general consists in a due sense and valuation of benefits, joined with humble acknowledgments of

them, and hearty desires and endeavours of requital. This is the nature of this virtue. Where I style it,—

1. A due sense and valuation of benefits. It is great ingratitude not to be sensible of favours, nor to remember or regard them as we ought: and therefore we find the Psalmist often blaming the Israelites, for not keeping God's mercies in remembrance; 'They regarded not the works of the Lord (saith he) neither considered they the operation of his hand.' Psal. xxviii. 5. Yea, 'Of the rock that begat them they were unmindful, and forgat the God that formed them.' Deut. xxxii. 18. This made him often to call upon his soul, saying, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' Psal ciii. 1, 2. He resolved to rub up his memory, saying, 'I will remember thy wonders of old, and will meditate on all thy works; for thou hast been gracious unto me, and thy mercy is over all thy works.' Psal. cxliii. 5.

And as gratitude requires the remembering and recollecting of benefits, so does it the high esteeming and valuing of them too: for we measure our thankfulness not so much by the worth of the things, as by the esteem we have of them. He that undervalues a benefit, his gratitude will be but small, if any; but he that sets a high price and value upon it, his heart will be filled with thankfulness: and therefore we find David often extolling and magnifying the works of the Lord; 'The mercies of the Lord are great, (saith he,) sought out of all that have pleasure therein.' Psal. cxi. 2. And elsewhere, 'His mercy is great unto the heavens, and his faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.' And indeed he that considers the undeserved freeness of God's bounty, and his own unworthiness of the least of his mercies, will be still magnifying of God's goodness, and raise his thankfulness accordingly.

2. I style it a due sense and valuation of benefits, joined with 'humble and frequent acknowledgments of them.' It is a known piece of gratitude, to own and publish what we have received; and indeed where the heart is truly sensible of a kindness, there the tongue will not be silent. Thus we find David, that great example of thanksgiving, often acknowledging the loving-kindness of the Lord; saying, 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, with my mouth will I make known his faithfulness to all generations.' Psal. lxxxix 1. 'I will publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and speak of all thy wondrous works.' Psal. xxvi. 7. 'I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart, my talk hath been of thy salvation.' Psal. xl. 10. These 'calves of the lips' are more acceptable unto God, than all the 'calves in the stall;' neither doth he call so much for the 'fruit of our land,' as the 'fruit of our lips,' in these acknowledgments.

3. To such humble acknowledgments we are to add hearty desires and endeavours of requital; which is the just tribute we owe to our great Benefactor. Hence we find David the devout thanksgiver frequently asking, 'What shall I render unto

the Lord for all his benefits?' He knew something was to be rendered to him, but knew not what was able to make any compensation to the donor, or answer the many and great obligations of the receiver. And indeed we can make no returns suitable to the number and greatness of God's mercies; for 'our righteousness extendeth not unto him,' neither is he the better for all our sacrifices. And therefore the Psalmist adds, 'I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my vows unto him, and praise him with joyful lips.' This he hath promised to accept as the best requital we can make, which therefore we should not fail to return to him. This is the virtue of thankfulness here taught us in these words, 'I thank my God.'

But, secondly, when is this duty to be performed? Why that, our apostle tells us, must be always; 'I thank my God always.' Which cannot be understood of a continual uninterrmitted course of thanksgiving; for then we must do nothing else, which would be both unreasonable and unpracticable: but of such a perseverance in the duty, as is agreeable with the nature of the thing, and the possibility of doing it. And so the phrase implies,—

1st, The frequent performance of the duty. What is seldom or never done, is in Scripture dialect said not to be done at all; and what is often done and repeated, is said to be done always: of both which, many examples might be given. 'Every day (saith David, that eminent example in this kind) will I bless the Lord, and sing praises unto him for ever and ever.' As God renews his mercies upon us every day, so are we every day to renew our thanksgivings; and what is done thus daily, is said to be done always.

2dly, The thanking of God 'always,' may imply the appointing and observing some certain seasons and opportunities for the performing of this duty; the constant observing whereof, though it includes not every minute of time, may and usually is termed the doing it always.

But this phrase here chiefly implies a constant readiness and preparation for this duty: he that is habitually disposed to give thanks, and willingly embraces all fit opportunities of expressing it, is in the Scripture sense said to do it always. So we are bid to 'pray continually,' and to 'pray without ceasing;' which does not require us to be always upon our knees, offering up our prayers, but to be still in a readiness and disposition for it upon every fit occasion. The good man is said to be ever 'merciful, and lendeth;' not that he is always actually dispensing of alms, but that his mind is ever inclined to do it as occasion offereth. In like manner, a grateful person is said to 'give thanks always,' because he is always disposed to do it upon all fit opportunities.

But, Thirdly, who are the persons, for whom we are thus to

thank God always? Why, the apostle's doing this here in the behalf of the Corinthians, shews that we are to do it for others as well as ourselves. Yea, the same apostle exhorts that 'prayers and giving of thanks be made for all men.' 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2. We are not to confine this office to ourselves, and only to bless God for the mercies we receive in our own person; but we are to enlarge it to others, and thank him for the blessings bestowed on them likewise. So the apostle did for these Corinthians, and we find him doing the same in the behalf of the Philippians: and likewise requiring us, as we have opportunity, to do the like for all men. Gal. iv. 10.

But, Fourthly, for what did the apostle here thank God in the behalf of the Corinthians? Why that the next words declare, it was 'for the grace of God, which was given to them by Jesus Christ.' Where by the grace of God we are to understand the gospel of grace, or the revelation of those sublime and saving truths contained in it; in which sense it frequently occurs in holy Scripture. So in the epistle to Titus, 'the grace of God which bringeth salvation,' is said to 'appear unto all men,' Tit. ii. 11; that is, the gospel of grace which bringeth the glad tidings of salvation, hath been made manifest both to Jew and Gentile, and men of all nations may now see and partake of the salvation of God. And so grace here signifies the great mercy of the gospel preached unto them; which is a mercy worthy of the greatest thanksgivings, for by it they were brought out of the darkness of paganism, and led into the marvellous light of Christianity: and they who before sat in the regions of the shadow of death, were by this means translated into the land of everlasting life; for which reason, life and immortality are said to be brought to light by the gospel. And this grace is here said to be 'given to them by Jesus Christ:' for he first preached this gospel unto them, and enlightened their minds with the knowledge of these divine and heavenly truths; upon which account he is styled, 'The true light that lighteneth every one that cometh into the world.' He who lay in the bosom of the Father, was alone able, and accordingly hath revealed the whole mind and will of God to us; shewing in the gospel the way to happiness, and discovering to all mankind the means of their salvation. Christ was the first purchaser, and likewise the first revealer of the kingdom of heaven, and it is he alone that hath discovered the way that leads to it; so that the light of the gospel is entirely his gift, and is indeed such an invaluable blessing, as well deserves the loudest praises and thanksgivings. And therefore well might the apostle here thank God for this grace and favour bestowed on these Corinthians; especially considering the many and great benefits they received thereby, of which he gives some account in the following verses. As,—

1. 'That in every thing they were enriched by him:' meaning, that in all things pertaining unto Christ they were plentifully

furnished, and wanted no means to attain unto them. He particularly instances first in their being 'enriched in all utterance,' which refers to that miraculous gift of tongues, which was granted to some of them, for the benefit and instruction of the rest. By this they learnt the christian religion themselves, and were able also to teach and propagate it unto others; having thereby such a wonderful variety and fluency of language, as enabled them to discover to all men the wonderful works of God. This the apostle calls here their being 'enriched,' and elsewhere their 'abounding in all utterance.' 2 Cor. viii. 7.

Next, he tells us, they were enriched and abounded in 'all knowledge;' that is, in the knowledge of all the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They had the understanding of prophecies, and the discerning of Christ in them, which was one of the richest and most exalted parts of knowledge; insomuch that what was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness,' was discerned by them to be 'the power of God unto salvation.' St. Paul preferred this above all other knowledge, and therefore instilled it into these Corinthians, who abounded in this rich treasure of Divine knowledge; which they learned likewise from him, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Moreover, the apostle adds,

2. That by this grace of God, 'the testimony of Christ was confirmed in them;' meaning, that by preaching the gospel to them, the testimony which they before gave of Christ is abundantly made good and confirmed in them; viz. that he was the promised Messiah, and that great Prophet that was to come to teach and to save mankind. Of this the light and knowledge they had received of him afforded evidence enough to remove all doubts out of men's minds concerning him; and the good fruits they had already reaped from this belief of him, was a sufficient argument to incline them and others to consent to the truth of it.

From all which the apostle infers, in the next verse, concerning these Corinthians, that 'they came behind in no gift,' that was necessary to the demonstration of the gospel, or the salvation of their own souls; so that now there was no need of any farther addition to be made to them, but only to persevere in their faith unto the end; 'waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' when he shall appear in glory with his holy angels, to crown his faithful servants with endless felicity, and to bring everlasting destruction upon all his enemies. Adding withal,

That if they do their part, 'Christ will confirm them unto the end,' and give them grace to hold out to that time, that 'they may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and may be found true and sincere Christians, when that time shall come.

Thus we see the sum and sense of the epistle for this day,

which contains St. Paul's rejoicing and giving of thanks in the behalf of the Corinthians, for the grace of God given unto them by Jesus Christ, and for their faith in the gospel; shewing the many and great benefits they received by it at present, and the much greater happiness they might expect from it hereafter.

It remains only to infer some practical lessons from the several parts of it. And,—

1. From the apostle's thanking of God for the grace bestowed on these Corinthians, and the benefits received thereby, we may learn to congratulate the good that others enjoy, as well as ourselves, and to thank God for one another's welfare. There are some of so narrow and stingy a spirit, as to look no farther than themselves, and to have little or no regard to the good of others. They may perhaps be sensible, and in some measure grateful too, for the mercies they receive themselves; but are too insensible and unthankful too, for whatever is conferred on their neighbours, though perhaps they themselves may reap some benefit by it.

This is what St. Paul complained of to the Philippians, that he knew no man 'like-minded' with himself, 'that would naturally care for their state; for all seek their own, but none the things that are of Jesus Christ.' Phil. ii. 19, 20.

There are others of a worse or more malignant spirit, that never look on the good of others but with an evil and envious eye, and instead of rejoicing in it, and thanking God for it, only repine and murmur at it. This is a wicked and diabolical temper, that, like the evil spirits, is grieved at the good, and pleased with the evil that befalls their neighbour; but St. Paul here teaches better things, to rejoice in the gifts and graces given to others, and to be thankful to God for them, as well as our own.

2. From the riches of Divine grace conveyed to these Corinthians by the preaching of the gospel, we may learn to set a due price and value upon the light of the gospel, and the many inestimable blessings we receive by it. If we weigh things aright, we cannot raise our thoughts too high of this transcendent privilege; for without it we should, like the benighted heathens, walk on still in darkness; and being left to the blind and uncertain conduct of nature, be unavoidably bewildered, and lose our way to heaven. We had then been destitute of all saving knowledge of God, of Christ, and of ourselves, and so must have groped on in the dark to our utter ruin. But now, by the preaching of the gospel, we are thoroughly instructed in all these, and infallibly directed in the way that leads to true happiness. This is a mercy that is highly worthy of our loudest praises and thanksgivings, and may teach us to make a right use and improvement of it. While we have the light, (saith the apostle,) let us walk in the light, and work by it, lest our ingratitude and abuse of it cause it to be withdrawn from us, and so lose an invaluable

blessing, which we knew not how to use. The neglect or contempt of it will heighten both our sin and our punishment; and better had it been not to have had the gospel and the means of grace, than to despise or neglect them, and to turn the deaf ear to its calls and admonitions. This we shall do well to remember before it be too late, lest the night come too fast upon us, and this prove at last to be 'our condemnation, that light is come into the world, but we loved darkness rather than light, because our deeds were evil.' John iii.

3. The testimony given of Christ being so fully confirmed by the gifts and graces of the gospel, let us learn to persevere in the faith, and love of the truth, even to the end. This the apostle exhorts to in all his epistles, to continue steadfast in the faith, and not to be shaken by the subtlety of false teachers, many of whom are gone abroad into the world, to deprave or destroy the faith. There are other temptations from the allurements of the world and the flesh, which we are to labour by the grace of God to withstand and conquer.

To which end, the apostle, in the last place, directs us to 'wait for the second coming of our Lord Jesus, who shall confirm us unto the end.' The continual expecting and preparing for that day, will keep us always upon our watch, and fortify us against the wiles of the wicked: it will make us 'hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,' and daily move us forward in our christian course; and by that means we shall be found 'blameless' and unreprovable 'in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ:' which God grant for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXXVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW xxii. 34, to the end.—*When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, who was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?* &c.

WE pray, in the collect for this day, for grace to withstand the temptations of the world, &c. The epistle gave us an instance of it in some of the Corinthians, who by the grace of the gospel successfully withstood them. But the gospel for the day furnishes us with a much higher and better instance of it, in the person of our Saviour, who was set upon by the Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees, with all the art and subtlety of temptation; and yet we read that he effectually withstood, worsted, and silenced them all. We read elsewhere how he vanquished the power and temptations of the devil, Matt. iv.; and here how he baffled the wisdom and wickedness of the world.

The gospel begins thus, 'When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence,' &c. The Sadducees were a sect among the Jews, that denied angels and spirits, and said there was no resurrection. Accordingly, some of them, to expose the resurrection, and to entrap our Saviour, came to him with this captious question, concerning a woman that had seven husbands, asking, 'In the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven, for they all had her?' Jesus, knowing their wickedness, replied, 'Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God;' meaning, that they discovered their great ignorance of a future state; 'for in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.' The relation of husband and wife is only during this life, and is dissolved and swallowed up in the next. And as touching the resurrection of the dead, he quoted to them out of the law, which they held in great estimation, that God was 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,' who being all dead, must rise and live again; 'for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' Upon the hearing hereof, they were all astonished, and could make him no answer. And then it follows, when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to silence, 'they were gathered together,' with a design to set upon him, and to entangle him in his talk. Then one of them, who was a lawyer or a scribe, 'asked him a question, tempting him and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?' This question was moved not with a desire to be satisfied, but with a design to ensnare him in his answer, and to hear what he would say. This way and method of their dealing with our Saviour by insidious and entangling questions, hath been sufficiently laid open in the gospel for the Sunday immediately before this, and therefore I shall add no more here concerning it.

As for the answer here given to this ensnaring question of the lawyer, it was such as he could no way gainsay or object against, viz., 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.' Both which being explained in the gospel for the thirteenth Sunday after Trinity, I shall refer the reader to it.

All that will be requisite to add here is about the order and greatness of these commandments; for the lawyer's question being, 'Which is the great commandment in the law?' our Saviour told him, that the loving of God above all things, 'is the first and great commandment;' and the loving our neighbour as ourselves, 'is the second, and like unto it;' and that 'upon these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Each of which will require a little explication. And,—

First, How is the love of God said to be the first commandment? Why, partly in order of time, and partly in order of nature.

1st, I say, it is so in order of time; the love of God being the

first thing to be taught and learnt of all that come to him; for all true religion begins with it, and is founded upon it: it is the first step we are to make towards our Maker, and that will lead us on to all the other parts of our duty and obedience to him. He that begins betimes with the love of God, will move on cheerfully after in the ways of his commandments; but he who is not touched with an unfeigned love of him, will be still wandering in the by-paths of sin and iniquity. So that our first and principal care should be, to set our hearts right towards God, and to turn the stream of our affections to him; and that will keep us right ever after.

2dly, The love of God is the first in order of nature, as being the root and spring of all other virtues. He that truly loves God, will fear him above all things, will trust in all conditions, will honour him in all his actions, will worship him at all times, and, in a word, will serve and depend upon him in the whole course of his life. All these virtues grow and thrive upon a stock of love; whereas he that wants or casts off the love of his Maker, will soon feel a decay in all these graces, and become an utter stranger and enemy to the ways of God; which should teach us to be rooted and grounded in love, the 'first' commandment. But,—

Secondly, How is the loving of God said to be the 'great' commandment? Why,—

1st, Upon the account of the greatness and dignity of the object; it being conversant about God, the greatest and noblest of all beings. For though all other graces have some relation to him, having God for their author; yet there is none that so immediately relates to him as this of love, having the Divine nature and perfections for its object, and being wholly employed in the contemplation and admiration of them. Now, the greatness of the object ever adds a value and dignity to the act relating to it; as the serving of a king is greater than the serving of a subject. Now, what greater and sublimer object can there be, than the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose transcendent excellencies render him infinitely lovely in himself, and whose superlative bounty makes him in the highest measure amiable unto us? And therefore, this precept of love, which is so directly employed and terminated in him, must be the great commandment; and so it is,—

2dly, Upon the account of the largeness and comprehensiveness of it; for it includes in it all other virtues, and comprises the whole duty of man. Hence St. Paul styles love 'the fulfilling of the law,' because it restrains from all things forbidden in it, and constrains to all things agreeable to and commanded by it. And therefore we find love sometimes called 'the old commandment,' being required from the beginning, and made a principle of nature, as well as a precept of Moses's law: sometimes 'a new commandment,' being renewed by Christ, and enforced upon us

by higher motives: sometimes 'all the commandments,' because it contains and runs through them all, and is the great wheel that moves all our obedience to him; for which reason it is justly reckoned the great commandment. As also,

3dly, Upon the account of the influence it hath upon all the parts and duties of religion, which have all their worth and acceptance entirely from it: for where the love of God is, there every thing is accepted; but where that is wanting, nothing can be well pleasing to him. The most weak and imperfect service will not miss of a reward, if the heart be sound and right towards God; whereas the most solemn and pompous performances without that, are but an abomination to him. Now that which gives all worth and excellence to other things, must itself be most excellent; and consequently, the loving of God procuring all audience to our prayers, and all acceptance to our good works, must for that reason be justly accounted 'the great commandment.' And so it is,—

Lastly, Upon the account of its perpetual and everlasting duration. Love is a permanent grace, and a virtue that will abide for ever; it is the comfort of this life, and the happiness of the next. When all other accomplishments of art and nature shall cease and vanish away, charity will never fail, and the love of God will be constant and continue for ever; it will go along with us into the other world, and there make up the greatest part of our felicity: for when faith shall be swallowed up in vision, and hope in fruition, then shall love remain, and be exalted to the highest perfection. All which plainly prove the loving of God to be 'the first and great commandment.' From whence I proceed,—

In the next place, to shew that the loving our neighbour is 'the second, and like unto it.' And so it is,—

1. In respect to the authority that commands it, and our obligation to observe it, which is the same in both. He that requires us to love God, hath required us to love our brother also; and as the one is to be loved with all the heart and soul, &c. so is the other to be loved even as ourselves: the same Divine authority is stamped on both, and therefore both are equally to be received and practised. He that offends in either of these points, is guilty of all: for he that said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' said also, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' The former is indeed the first and great commandment, but the latter is the second, and like unto it; and he that doth the one without the other, is a transgressor of the law: yea, he that saith he loves God, and hateth his brother, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. By which it appears that both these commandments agree in the act of love, and likewise in the authority that commands them, which is the same in both. Moreover,—

2. The second is like unto the first, in respect of the ground

and motive of our obedience, which are some divine perfections residing in God, and communicated to his creatures. Our love to man is grounded upon the love of God; and we depart not from the love of our Maker, by loving our neighbour, but rather heighten and increase it: for it is for God's sake, and upon his his account, that we pay this affection to his creature. Indeed, we are to love God for himself, for his own infinite and adorable perfections; and we are to love our neighbour for the likeness and relation he bears to him, and for the sake of those excellencies he hath derived upon him. So that both being founded upon the same motive, may well enough be likened one to the other. Again,

3. The second is like unto the first, in respect of the extent and comprehensiveness of it: for as the love of God includes the whole of that duty and homage we owe unto him, so the love of our neighbour comprises all the good offices we are to pay unto him. And therefore St. Paul hath summed up the whole decalogue in this one word, and styles love the fulfilling of the law; for 'he that loveth another (saith he) hath fulfilled the law.' For this, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Rom. xiii. 8, 9. Where all the precepts that concern the good and welfare of our neighbour are summed up in the loving of him; and so for the fullness and largeness of it, it is like to the former. And so it is,—

Lastly, In respect of the reward and punishment that attend the keeping or breaking of it, which is the same in both. We read in the 25th of Matthew, that all acts of love and charity done to the afflicted members of Christ, are taken to be done to Christ himself; and all neglect of them to our poor neighbour, are interpreted as a contempt of Christ, and both are rewarded or punished accordingly: the former with, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit a kingdom;' the latter with, 'Go ye cursed into everlasting fire,' &c. Where the love of our neighbour hath the same reward annexed to it with the love of God, and the hatred of our brother hath the same punishment with the hatred of God: which shews them to be much alike both in their nature and consequents.

To all which, our Saviour adds, that 'on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' The sense whereof is,—

1st, That all the law and the prophets conspire and agree in these two commandments, and that they are consonant to all that is written or delivered by them; Moses in the beginning, and the Prophets after him, urging both these precepts upon us. But the principal sense of it is,—

2dly, That these two commandments comprise the whole of

the law and the prophets: and all that is delivered in both, is briefly summed up in these two things, to love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. All the doctrine of Moses and the Prophets, with all the writings of the Old and New Testament, have relation to and dependence upon these precepts: they are the two great hinges upon which the whole law turns, or the pegs on which it hangs; they are the props of the two tables, or the great wheels on which they move. In a word, this being the whole substance of our duty, we may see the excellency, the equity, and the easiness of God's laws; which requiring nothing from us but love, the sweetest and most pleasing of all passions, and that too of the highest and best objects, viz., God and our neighbour, we may not complain of his laws as difficult, or decline them as unreasonable, but rather say with the apostle, 'his commandments are not grievous.'

Thus we see how wisely our Saviour answered the cavils of this carping lawyer, not only eluding his captious and ensnaring question, but instructing him in two necessary and weighty duties.

But 'while the Pharisees were gathered together,' and before they parted, Jesus thought fit to puzzle and put them to silence, by moving to them a question in their own way; saying, 'What think ye of Christ, whose Son is he?' or of whose stock is he to come? 'They say unto him, the son of David,' of whose loins and lineage he was to descend. Then Jesus replied to them, 'How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his Son? And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man, from that day forth, ask him any more questions.' This question of our Saviour's posed them all, and put them quite out of their former course of asking questions, finding they could take no advantage against him.

This is the sum of the gospel for this day; from which we may observe,

1. The great trouble our Saviour had from the sectaries of his time; and from thence we may not wonder if we find the same or the like from the sectaries of our days. The Sadducees, Scribes, and Pharisees were the principal dissenters and separatists in the Jewish church, the two former pretending to greater knowledge, the latter to greater sanctity and holiness than other men; all of them setting up their own wisdom above that of the church, and separating from each other upon pretences of greater purity and edification. To which ends they often set upon Christ and his apostles with all the arts of insinuation and entangling queries, to undermine the doctrine established and preached by them: and this was the occasion of the many precepts to unity, and the many cautions against divisions, that are extant in the New Testament. The like methods of insinuation and queries are still used by the

dissenters and sectaries of our days, together with the like cabals and contrivances for the countenancing and propagating their divisions. And as Christ and his apostles sought then by the extraordinary methods of miracles and doctrine to oppose those gainsayers, so are we still to endeavour to put them to silence, by the ordinary ways of argument or authority.

2. If the 'loving of God be the first and great commandment,' then this ought to be first minded and endeavoured by us, that we may be rooted and grounded in the love of him; and that growing and increasing in us, will lead us to all the other parts of our duty to him. To which end, we are to think often of his infinite and adorable perfections, together with his unspeakable love and kindness to us, which are great enough to engage and inflame our affections; adding hereunto our daily prayers, that he would shed abroad his love into our hearts, that we may no longer resist his powerful charms, and that we may at last obtain that crown of life, which he hath promised and prepared for them that love him.

3. If 'the love of our neighbour be the second commandment, and like unto the first,' then ought this in the next place to be minded and laboured for: and let us not think, (as too many do,) that their duty to God will excuse them from their duty to their neighbour. We may not make the two tables of the law to clash or interfere with one another, nor think that the keeping of the one will atone for the breaking of the other; but being both alike in their authority and obligation, they are to be equally kept and observed by us, loving God for his own, and our neighbour for his sake. And,—

Lastly, If 'on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,' then all our hopes and expectations must depend upon the observation of them. The will of God must not be performed by halves, nor may we hope to enter into life without keeping both these commandments. And as God hath in both consulted our good, as well as his own glory, so let us make both the standing rule of our lives and actions.

DISCOURSE CCXXXVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EPHES. iv. 17, to the end.—*This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened*, &c.

THE collect for this day teaches us to pray to God, that forasmuch as without him we are not able to please him, he would mercifully grant us his Holy Spirit, in all things to direct and rule our hearts. Accordingly,—

The epistle for the day shews us,—

First, Our utter inability of ourselves to please God, set forth by the natural state of the Gentiles before they received the gospel.

Secondly, The gracious aids and assistances of God's Holy Spirit in order to please him, represented in the happy estate of Christians by the grace and favour of the gospel.

Thirdly, Some of those rules by which the Holy Spirit in all things directs our hearts in the right way. These things are the sum of this epistle, which must therefore be particularly considered.

First, The epistle begins with an earnest exhortation to the Ephesians, who were lately converted from heathenism to Christianity, to lead other and better lives than they did before their conversion. 'This I say and testify in the Lord (saith the apostle) that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles,' &c. This is a matter that I am solemnly to declare and publish to you, that being become Christians, ye live no longer after the manner of heathens, either in the vanity of their minds, or the vileness of their practices; for though in times of ignorance God winked at many things, yet now he commands all men to repent, and to turn from their idol worship to the living God. Let your carriage therefore be suitable to your privileges, and your actions answer your profession, which alone can render them pleasing and acceptable unto God. From whence he proceeds to let these Ephesians know their utter inability to please God in their Gentile state. And that,—

1st, Because 'their understandings were darkened,' and their minds overspread with blindness and ignorance. 'Ye were sometimes darkness,' (saith the apostle, Eph. v. 8.) Before the light of the gospel shone upon you, ye were not only dark, but darkness itself, being destitute of all true knowledge of God, of Christ, or yourselves; and so were, as he expresses it, 'without God, and without Christ, and without hope in the world.' This was the forlorn condition of the Ephesians, whilst they continued heathens; and this is the natural state and condition of us all, before we are received into Christ's Church, and become Christians; in which estate it is impossible to please God. Again,—

2dly, He tells them, in the next verse, that they 'were alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them, and because of the blindness of their hearts;' meaning, that their want of knowledge drove them to those courses, that deprived them of all spiritual life, and made them dead in trespasses and sins; by which means they were no more able to move in the ways of God, than a dead carcase, which is void of all motion; and sure in such a condition it is no way possible to please God. And we, too, in our natural state are as far removed from all spiritual life and motion, till we are quickened by Divine grace. Moreover,—

3dly, He tells them, in the following verse, that they 'were past feeling, and so gave themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness;' that is, their hearts were hardened, and their consciences so seared, that they lost all the impressions of good and evil; a long course of sinning had brought that senselessness and benumbedness upon their spirits, that they felt no more the weight of their sins, than a dead man in the grave doth the burden of earth that lies upon him. This made them commit all manner of vice and wickedness without any regret or remorse, and especially the abominable vices of uncleanness; running as greedily after their lusts, as a hungry person does after his victuals; giving themselves over to all kind of lewdness and lasciviousness, and so falling into those beastly and unnatural lusts, that are not to be named among Christians.

This is the sad condition of the heathens or Gentiles, and this was the deplorable state of these Ephesians, before they embraced Christianity, of which the apostle thought fit to put them in mind: Eph. ii. 12, 'Ye were (saith he) without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' In which condition we may well enough conclude, that neither they nor we can do any thing of ourselves to please God. From whence the apostle proceeds, in the four following verses, to declare the happy change made in them, by the light of the gospel, and the influence of the Divine grace; which will lead me,—

Secondly, To the gracious aids and assistances of God's Holy Spirit, to enable us to please him. When St. Paul had recited the many miseries and abominable vices of the heathens, he adds, in the next words, concerning the Ephesians, 'But ye have not so learned Christ;' meaning, that they had learned better things from the christian religion, 'if so be that they had heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus;' that is, if they had heard and received the word aright, and been thoroughly instructed in the truth of the christian doctrine, they would soon see the error and danger of those ways, for that would discover to them the deformity of their former practices, and lead them to new and better courses. And this he tells them is the main design of Christ's religion, that ye should learn thereby to 'put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;' that is, that ye should change your former course of life, and cast off those vile and sinful practices that lead to such foul and filthy lusts. 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;' that it may be set on new and better things. Which is expressed in the next words, by 'putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;' that is, that ye seek to beget in you new desires, new purposes, and pursuits after greater and nobler objects, that ye may be restored again to that lost image of God, which consists in a sincere piety and purity of mind.

This is what the apostle hoped and prayed for in the behalf of these Ephesians, upon their receiving the gospel, and becoming Christians; that the change of their mind might be accompanied with a change of their life, and their new principles engage them to new practices according to them; by which alone they could be enabled to please God, and to do things acceptable to him. All which are owing to the light of the gospel, and the blessed influences of God's Holy Spirit working by it. And this will lead me, in the

Third place, to the rules here given by the Holy Spirit to direct our hearts aright in the ways of Christianity; and these directions take up the remaining part of this chapter. The great general direction to these Ephesians is, that henceforth they walk not as other Gentiles walked in the vanity of their minds, but that they shun all the deeds of darkness practised by them, and walk as children of the light, and as becometh Christians. To which end, the

1st rule given to them is to avoid lying, and to speak nothing but truth in their commerce and communication with one another: ver. 25, 'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.' Lying was one of the great sins and abominations of the heathens, who having little or no regard to truth, dealt chiefly in falsehood and deceit. It is one of the works of the devil, who is a lying spirit in the mouths of all that are given to it: 'Ye are of your father the devil, (saith our Saviour,) and the works of your father ye will do, for he was a liar from the beginning, and the father of it. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own,' for he was the first inventor, and is still the great solicitor to it. 'Why hath Satan filled thy heart, (saith St. Peter to Ananias,) that thou shouldst lie unto the Holy Ghost?' Acts v. 3. It is the devil that puts it into men's hearts to falsify and utter lies; and therefore, however you lived in these things whilst ye continued heathens, yet now being Christians, you must abhor and abandon them; for lying is directly opposite and provoking to the Holy Spirit, who is a Spirit of truth, and desireth truth in the inner and outward parts. And because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, we must first cleanse the fountain, that the streams issuing from it may be pure and clean: wash thine heart from wickedness, and then thy tongue will be free from deceit, then wilt thou speak nothing but truth to thy neighbour; which should be the rather done, because 'we are members one of another:' we are members of the same natural body, as men; and of the same mystical body, as Christians; and therefore should be true and faithful to one another.

2dly, Another direction here given is to avoid all rash and immoderate anger, in the next verses: 'Be angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath, neither give place to the devil.' This was likewise another great sin of the Gentiles,

who let loose the reins to inordinate passions, and thereby created brawls and bloody contentions; but it must not be so among Christians, they are to restrain and bridle their passions by the grace of meekness, and to keep themselves from all sinful and excessive anger: for though men may be sometimes angry without sin, yet they may never be so without a cause; neither should any small or slight thing inflame us, for nothing but great and weighty matters are able to justify a passion. Moreover, where there may be a just cause of anger, it must not rise too high, or kindle too great a flame, but must be kept within due bounds, and not break out into bitter and contumelious language; nor must it continue too long to bake into rancour and malice, but we must make all haste to subdue that rage, and to be reconciled to our offending brother. We may 'not let the sun go down upon our wrath;' that is, it must not continue to the evening, but be removed before sunset, lest it hinder our evening prayer; wherein we beg forgiveness of God, as we forgive our brethren. Plutarch tells us of the Pythagoreans, that if any anger or quarrel arose among them, they were, before the sun went down, to shake hands and be made friends; which is the apostle's lesson here to these Ephesians, not to harbour any secret grudges, but to suppress all causeless and inordinate anger; and the rather, because to give way to unruly passions, is to 'give place to the devil;' it is to suffer the evil one to get ground upon us, and to be led away by his wicked suggestions. Contrary whereunto, we are here taught to be led by the Spirit of God into the ways of peace, meekness, and reconciliation, and to agree with our adversary quickly, as becometh Christians.

3dly, Another direction here given, is to avoid theft, and to labour for an honest livelihood, in the following words; 'Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.' Stealing was another sin that was rife, and commonly practised among the Gentiles, who having little or no sense of property, brake down the inclosures of right, and invaded one another. Their ignorance of God and his laws led them into all the acts of rapine and injustice without any remorse, whereas these things are set in a better light by the gospel, and we more clearly see the evil and danger of them: and if the heathens, who had only the dim light of nature and reason to direct them, were left without excuse in these matters; how much more inexcusable shall we be, who beside that have the clearer light of revelation to guide us in them! Let none then that pretend to be Christians, prove thieves or robbers; or if any have been found guilty of this sin, let them reform and 'steal no more,' but rather learn by their own 'labour' to earn their own living: for theft is the effect of idleness, and the lazy person hath no way of living but by stealing; to prevent which, let them 'work with their hands,' if they are engaged in any handicraft or

mechanical employments; or with their heads, if they are set in higher stations, for the public good, that they may have sufficient not only for their own necessities and conveniences, but to supply the wants of those that need.

4thly, Another direction here given, is to avoid all corrupt communication, which leads to all the natural lusts and uncleanness of the Gentiles: ver. 29, 'Let no corrupt communication come out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.' Evil communication corrupts good manners, whereas good discourse tends to instil knowledge, and increase piety. The tongue, if employed aright, is the glory of a man; but if used otherwise, is a shame and reproach to him, being an instrument and incentive to much wickedness. Lewd talk proceeds from a corrupt heart, and brings on corrupt practices, as foul streams issue from a corrupt fountain, and going on contract greater foulness; and therefore our Saviour wills that our communication be yea, yea, nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil, Matt. v. All additions of obscenity or swearing are from the devil, and lead to him; and therefore should be as carefully shunned and avoided, as we flee from poison and infection. To all which the apostle adds,—

5thly, A caution against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, 'by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption,' ver. 30. 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' which is done by the forementioned vices; for the Spirit of God being a Spirit of truth, cannot but be offended with lying and falsehood; as also being a Spirit of meekness, must be displeased with all inordinate passion; being a Spirit of justice and integrity, cannot away with the evil arts of dishonesty and double-dealing; and, lastly, being a Spirit of purity, is grieved at all impurity of words or actions. All which evils being so directly contrary to the nature and office of the Holy Spirit, will, if persisted in without repentance, cause him to withdraw his grace and presence from us. But beside these, there are two things that do more especially grieve and provoke the Holy Spirit of God; and they are, the quenching its good motions, and the stifling and abusing its gifts. For the

(1.) The Holy Spirit of God, either by the calls of his holy word, or the secret checks and whispers of our own conscience, often minds us of our duty, and persuades to it; it gives us to hear a voice behind or within us, saying, This is the way, walk in it, when we are turning to the right hand or to the left. Hence it cheers and comforts us, when we go aright; and reprehends and troubles us, when we go astray. Now, the hearkening to these good motions, rejoices the Holy Spirit, and causes him to abide with us; but the turning the deaf ear or suppressing of them, grieves and drives him from us. Again,—

(2.) The Holy Spirit of God is pleased to bestow many gifts and talents upon us, for the good of ourselves and others; which,

if we use and employ aright to the ends for which they are given, this Holy Spirit will be so far pleased as to pronounce us good and faithful servants now, and reward us at last with an entrance into our Master's joy: but if we neglect or abuse them, that is, if we neither use them at all, or use them amiss; he will be so far displeased as to deprive us of them, and not only withdraw the light of his grace here, but doom us to everlasting darkness hereafter: which should make us careful to please, and afraid to grieve him. And that because it is by 'this Spirit we are sealed to the day of redemption;' that is, as goods that are bought are wont to be marked with the buyer's seal or mark, so the Spirit of God is the seal by which we are marked for the purchased and redeemed people of God: where there is an allusion to those places or countries where men are as ordinarily bought as any other commodity, in which nothing is more ordinary than to set a seal or mark upon them, either in their forehead, or in some other part, to distinguish them from other men's servants: in like manner the servants of God are distinguished from others by this seal of the Spirit; so the apostle tells us, 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his;' being hereby sealed to the great 'day of redemption.'

Finally, The apostle to conclude all, exhorts these Ephesians, that 'all bitterness of spirit, all wrath and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking be put away from them, with all malice:' all which being so opposite and displeasing to the Spirit of God, which is to direct and rule our hearts, they should above all things labour to subdue and mortify, as contrary to the commands of Christ, and the spirit of the gospel, which they had received; adding in the close, that instead of those black passions before rehearsed, they should be 'kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake had forgiven them.' These are some of the prime and peculiar virtues of Christianity, and some of the principal graces of God's Holy Spirit, which teaches us an universal kindness to all men, a compassionate tenderness for all their infirmities, and a ready forgiveness of all little injuries and indignities; for all which Christ hath given both his command and example.

This is the sum of the epistle for this day, wherein what St. Paul saith here to the Ephesians, he saith unto all Christians, and to us especially, who are of the Gentile race; and therefore having by the light of the gospel, the vices of the heathens, and the virtues of Christians, so clearly discovered to us, let us all learn heartily to forsake the former, and follow the latter to our lives' end. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXXXIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW ix. 1—9.—*Jesus entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city; and behold they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed,* &c.

THIS gospel for the day contains an account of a miracle wrought by our Saviour, in healing a person sick of the palsy; in the relating whereof we may observe,—

First, The circumstances leading to it.

Secondly, What happened at the time of working it. And,

Thirdly, What followed after it.

First, For the circumstances leading to it. We read in the first verse, that 'Jesus entered into a ship, and passed over; he was then on the other side of the water, in the country of the Gergesens, where he dispossessed a legion of devils out of two men possessed with them; which spirits entering into a herd of swine, they ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. The people, astonished at the seeing or hearing hereof, went all out of the city to meet Jesus, and being terrified at the greatness of his power, or troubled for the loss of their swine, instead of desiring more of his company, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts. Hereupon 'he entered into a ship, and passed over' to the other side, 'and came into his own city,' that is, into Capernaum, a city in Galilee, called 'his own city,' because he then had his habitation, and dwelt there. The former place of his abode was Nazareth, the place of his conception and education; for which, as also for his long continuance there, he is often called 'Jesus of Nazareth.' During his abode there he lived in constant communion with the Jewish church, of which he was a member; for St. Luke tells us, that 'his custom was to go into the synagogue every sabbath day;' where he sometimes 'stood up to read,' and teach the people, Luke iv. 16. Though the people of Nazareth were none of the best, as appears by that proverbial saying, 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?' yet he made no separation, and blamed the Pharisees for so doing upon pretences of greater purity. So great a lover was Jesus Christ of the peace and unity of the Church, for which he gave both his precept and example, contrary to the practice of some seeming zealots in our days, who for worldly ends rend and divide the christian church.

But to go on, Christ 'leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt in Capernaum,' which is upon the sea-coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Napthali, as we read, Matt. iv. 13. When he came there he began to preach and to expound to the people the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; insomuch that 'they who before sate in darkness, saw great light, and to them which sate in the region and shadow of death, is light sprung up,' ver. 16, 17 of that

chapter. The fame of his doctrine, which was confirmed by many miracles, brought much people unto him; among the rest, we are here told in our text, that upon his return to his own city, or dwelling-place at Capernaum, 'Behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed.' Sometimes they brought or carried infirm, diseased and possessed people unto him; at other times he himself went to them that were unable to come; sometimes he sent salvation to them, and by his word spake them whole at a distance, it being all one to his divine power to cure them present or absent. Here they brought to him a paralytic, that was so sick and shaken with a palsy, that he could neither stand nor go, and so could only be brought lying on a bed.

But how was he received? Did our Saviour refuse to see him, or to take the trouble of the cure? Did he disdain his poverty, or dismiss him without hearing or healing of him? No, he was so far from refusing any, that he sought out objects for his mercy and compassion to work upon; he was never weary, but still went up and down doing good; his will was always as ready as his power, and his goodness as both. Poverty and sickness were the motives of his mercy, and the misery and meanness of any one's condition rather helped than hindered the influence of his bounty. Accordingly his bowels yearned towards this sick person, and 'seeing their faith,' which he did by this extraordinary way of bringing him to him, 'said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer;' he was affected towards him as a father is to a son, and pitied him as much as a parent doth his own child whom he loveth: Son, saith he; and what a loving compellation is that to a stranger, and in distress too, and from the mouth of the Son of God! How was he transported, think you, at so dear and gracious a title, or what might he not expect from one who at first sight took him into so near a relation; 'Son, be of good cheer!' What reviving words were these to this poor paralytic! A cordial higher than the strongest potion, especially coming from the lips of so divine a person.

But what were the ingredients in it, that could administer so much comfort? Why, that the next words declare, Son, be of good cheer, 'thy sins be forgiven thee;' words that drop the greatest sweetness, and are able to revive the most fainting spirit; for next to health, which he afterward restored, what could more comfort a sick person than the forgiveness of his sins, which is far better than health or life itself? And therefore before he removed the distempers of his body, or cured his palsy, he thought fit to heal the greater maladies of his soul, and to seal his pardon to him; well knowing that both soul and body would fare well enough when that was done.

But 'certain of the Scribes,' whose eyes were evil, because his were good, 'said within themselves,' for they durst not speak it openly, 'This man blasphemeth, for who can forgive sins, save God only? Where, by reasoning among themselves, they sought

to charge him with blasphemy, partly to render him odious to the people, by usurping upon God, and assuming to himself the sole incommunicable prerogative of forgiving of sins; and partly to bring him under the censure and penalty of the law against blasphemy, which was to be stoned to death; for so we read, Levit. xxiv. 16, 'He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him, as well the stranger, as he that dwelleth in the land; when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death.' Thus we find that when Christ said, 'I and my Father are one,' they said he blasphemed, and were taking up of stones to stone him, John x. 30, 31. And when he styled himself 'The Son of God,' they asked him, Why blasphemest thou, saying, I am the Son of God? and were again for stoning him, ver. 36. Blasphemy is a sin that flieth in the face of heaven, by detracting from the honour of God, or invading his attributes, and justly deserves the severest punishment; and being so heinous and capital a crime, the Scribes and Pharisees, the bitter enemies of our Saviour, sought to fasten it upon him, and thereby either to put him to death, or to put a stop to the spreading of his doctrine.

But 'Jesus, knowing their thoughts,' which, being searcher of the hearts, could not be hid from him, 'said unto them, Why think ye evil in your hearts?' which was but a gentle reproof for so vile an accusation; why do ye entertain such hard thoughts, or harbour in your hearts such malicious designs? And the better to convince them of the folly of their evil and unjust surmises, he makes a comparison between the power of forgiving of sins, and the power of giving health to a sick man by a word's speaking; asking the question, 'Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee? or to say, Arise and walk?' and though both these are equally easy and feasible to a divine power, yet, because they vainly thought it a higher and more difficult thing to cure this diseased man by a word, than to forgive him his sins, he was pleased to do that which they judged most difficult, to convince them that he could do that which they esteemed more easy; and so argued with them *a majori ad minus*, from his doing the greater to his ability of doing the less: and that the same divine power, that was able to restore health to his body by a word's speaking, was able likewise to save his soul, by sealing to him the pardon of his sins; the same infinite and Almighty power being required to both.

Now here follows the miracle, for their satisfaction, in the next words; 'That ye may know that the Son of man, (whom you are so apt to despise,) hath power on earth,' as well as in heaven, 'to forgive sins; then saith he to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house:' upon the uttering of which words, he immediately 'arose, and departed to his own house.' These healing words of our Saviour chased

away his disease, rid him of his palsy, and restored him perfectly sound and whole. He who was borne on the shoulders of four men to our Saviour, was very well able to go home alone; and he who before depended wholly upon the strength of others, was now able to walk by his own; he bore the bed upon his shoulders that before bore him, and returned more nimbly to his house than his former bearers.

This is the miracle which we read, and ought to meditate upon this day, and is indeed well worthy of it, being a miracle truly great and divine in sundry respects: as,—

1st, In respect of the author, who was no less a person than the Son of God, and God blessed for ever; his daily and ordinary actions highly deserve our notice and observation, but his miraculous acts much more. The Jews were charged and upbraided with ingratitude for not considering the works of the Lord, nor regarding the operations of his hand; but how much more may Christians be upbraided with it, if they regard not the miracles of Christ, which so vastly exceeded all that was done or recorded by Moses and the prophets? Corazin and Bethsaida, who heard the doctrine, and saw the miracles of Christ, were threatened with a heavier doom than Tyre and Sidon, who were never blessed with either; and Capernaum, where this and many other miracles were performed, were said to be lifted up to heaven in their privileges, and therefore should sink so much the deeper into hell, for their not believing and amending by them. In like manner, sad will be the account of the deists and infidels of our age, for doubting or denying the truth of these miracles, which stand upon record in the gospel, and were confirmed beyond all reasonable contradiction.

2dly, This miracle was great in respect of the person upon whom it was wrought, who laboured under those great and incurable distempers, which neither nature nor art were ever able to remove, and yet were soon and easily cured by his Divine hand: which shews it,—

3dly, To be great and worth consideration, in respect of the wonderful manner of effecting it, which was not by the natural and ordinary ways and methods of physic, but only by a word of his mouth; for he no sooner said, 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk,' but presently he, who before was not able to move hand or foot, was able to do all these.

Lastly, This miracle was great in respect of the end for which it was wrought: and that was partly to confirm the divinity of Christ's person, and partly to confirm the truth of the doctrine delivered by him: both which were abundantly proved by such works of wonder, as no man ever did, and such words of eternal life, as no man ever spoke; and therefore we find our Saviour appealing to them for the proof of his Messiahship, saying, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the

works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.' John x. 37, 38. This for the miracle.

But what was the effect of it? or what influence had it upon those that saw it? Why, that the

Last words of the gospel will inform us; 'When the multitude saw it, they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such power unto men.' Admiration and adoration were the general and usual effects and consequents of all his mighty works, which carried such apparent marks and signatures of a Divine hand, as could not but astonish, and make them stand amazed at the sight of them. 'They marvelled,' that is, they were seized with wonder, and struck with admiration at the greatness of them, and the supernatural ways of doing them; and that put them upon 'glorifying of God,' ascribing all the efficacy and operation of them to his Divine hand, who alone was able to bring them to pass; adoring his Almighty and infinite wisdom and goodness in making men the instruments of doing such mighty works for their conviction; for he it was that 'gave such power unto men.' Such they yet thought Christ to be, being not fully instructed in his eternal power and godhead.

Thus we see the substance of this day's gospel, and the miracle related in it, which is every way worthy of our most serious thoughts and meditations. And from the whole we may learn the following lessons:—

1. From Christ's passing over the sea, and going from place to place, we learn his unwearied diligence in doing good, for that was the end and design of all his motions: his whole life was spent in the service of mankind, and promoting their welfare; he did it not by the bye, or now and then upon great occasions, but it was the whole employment of his life; his meat and drink, and recreation too was to be doing good. His practice herein is an excellent pattern for all his followers, who are to imitate him herein as far as they can, and to omit no opportunities of serving one another, according to their several abilities and capacities. But this hath been elsewhere pressed and recommended more at large.

2. From what hath been said, we may observe our Saviour's great kindness to this poor paralytic, in healing the maladies both of body and soul together; for he at once removed his palsy for the health of his body, and pronounced his pardon for the welfare of his soul, and by both blessed him with a perfect and complete cure of all his infirmities: he did not things by halves, nor made any empty and insignificant offers of kindness, but ever did more than he seemed to promise or pretend to, yea more than any could ask or think; which is a farther instance of his inexpressible love to mankind, and ought to be both admired and imitated by us as well as we may.

3. From the Scribes and Pharisees carping at our Saviour, and

charging him with blasphemy for forgiving the sins of this poor paralytic, we learn the proneness of evil men to defame the best persons, and find fault with the best actions; and if they dealt so with Christ himself, his disciples may not expect better dealing from them. The disciple is not above his Lord; and if our Master met with evil treatment from the Scribes and Pharisees, we may learn to bear with the same usage from the like persons: daily experience shows us how apt ill-minded men are to accuse and traduce such as are every way better than themselves, and to spy a mote in their brother's eye, when they cannot see a beam in their own; we find what perverse comments and constructions they make of the most innocent and well-meaning actions, and how greedily they seek occasions of trouble and disturbance. We observed this in many other instances of the Pharisees, and we may easily observe the same in too many of their followers.

4. From our Saviour's working a miracle to take off the charge of blasphemy, and exerting his Divine power to silence his enemies, we may learn to use all possible means, and particularly 'by well-doing (as the apostle directs) to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.' St. Paul's advice is, 'Let not your good be evil spoken of.' Now though this be not always in our power to prevent, yet we are to do the best we can, to elude the cavils and calumnies of evil men. There are some who are as ready now to blaspheme the ways, as they were of old the person of Christ: and as to these, our endeavour should be to put a muzzle upon their mouths, as we do upon some creatures, who are too apt both to bark and bite; that is, to cut off all occasion from them that seek occasion, that they may be either afraid or ashamed to speak evil of us.

Lastly, From the people's glorifying and blessing God upon this miracle of healing a sick man, let us learn to give God the glory of all his mercies, and to ascribe the honour due to his name; particularly, as we are taught by the gospel for this day, let us praise God as for the life and doctrine, so for the miracles of our blessed Saviour, which gave the highest honour and confirmation to both. Let us frequently meditate on the number and greatness of them, the better to raise our minds to a higher esteem and thankfulness for them; that will mightily conduce to the confirming of us in the belief of his doctrine, and to the building of us up more firmly in our most holy faith, and that will bring us at last to the end of our faith, even the salvation of our soul. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXL.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EPHES. v. 15—21. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is,* &c.

WE are taught in the collect for this day to pray, that we may be kept from all things that may hurt us, that so being ready both in body and soul, we may cheerfully accomplish those things that God would have done, &c. Which things requiring no small care and diligence to accomplish them,

The epistle for the day begins with an exhortation to a wise, wary and circumspect walking, to prevent the evils that may otherwise befall us. The apostle, in the foregoing part of the chapter, had minded the Ephesians of the happy change wrought in them by their embracing the gospel, how they were translated from 'darkness to light,' and from the power of Satan unto God, and therefore willed them to 'walk as children of light,' ver. 8. And because of the many dangers, difficulties and discouragements they might meet with in the way, he would have them to look warily about them: 'See then that ye walk circumspectly,' &c. Where we have,

First, A caution to look to our ways, and walk circumspectly; which being ushered in with a note of attention, 'See then,' shews it to be a matter necessary to be observed, and dangerous to be omitted.

Secondly, We have a pattern or direction to walk by, expressed both negatively and positively; 'Not as fools, but as wise.'

Thirdly, We have a way or means prescribed for our circumspect walking; and that is by 'redeeming the time.'

Fourthly, A strong argument or motive to persuade thereunto; and that is, 'Because the days are evil.' These things with the good use and improvement to be made of them, contain the whole of this day's epistle.

First, I begin then with the caution here given to all Christians, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly;' in the original it is, 'See how circumspectly ye can walk:' where a Christian's life is described by walking, which we know is a progressive motion, and implies a continual going forward; it is opposed to sitting still, or indulging to ease and idleness, and so gives us to understand, that Christianity is no idle, lazy, or sluggish thing, but consists in action, and is still moving us forward in the ways of holiness and virtue. Hence we find it set forth in Scripture by such expressions as imply activity and motion: it is sometimes called a 'seeking or searching after God,' which imports solicitousness and intention; sometimes a 'pressing forward towards the mark,' which betokens labour and difficulty,

and engages the whole man; sometimes again it is expressed by 'a race,' which bespeaks the swiftest motion, and requires us not only to walk, but to run the paths of God's commandments; lastly, to mention no more, it is often compared to 'a warfare,' which we know calls for our main strength, and excites the greatest diligence: all which and other like expressions shew religion to be no lazy, but an active and busy thing, that finds employment for all our faculties, and puts us upon the continual exercise of virtue and good works. This is implied here in the word 'walking,' so often used in Scripture to express our christian course.

But how are we here directed to walk? Why, that the next word tells us, 'See that ye walk circumspectly.' The word in the original is ἀκριβῶς, which signifies an exact, regular, and accurate walking, or a keeping close to the rule, without transgressing or swerving from it, either by omitting what it requires, or committing what it forbids. Now here great care and circumspection is necessary,

1st, To find out the right way in which we are to walk.

2dly, To walk warily, prudently and inoffensively in it. And,

3dly, To persevere and keep in it to the very last.

1st, I say, circumspection is necessary in seeking and finding out the right way in which we are to walk; for there are many bye-paths of error and delusion, in which we may lose our way and ourselves too without a great deal of care and diligence. Satan is very busy to blind and mislead us; the world hath many snares and temptations to draw us into 'the broad way that leads to destruction;' there are many false prophets and teachers gone abroad into the world, who, under a show of strictness, would entice us into looseness and libertinism; and our own corrupt and deceitful hearts are too apt to close in and join with these deceivers: and therefore no small care and diligence is requisite to find out 'the straight gate,' and to walk in 'the narrow way that leads to life,' since our Saviour tells us, that 'few there be that find it.' He that loseth his way will never come to his journey's end, unless he leave the wrong, and get into the right path that leads to it. But errors in religion are of all others the most fatal and dangerous, for they ofttimes endanger the loss both of body and soul; which should teach us to use our utmost care to know the truth, and to steer our course aright: and this will be no very difficult task to an honest and well-meaning inquirer, for God hath made the way of our duty plain before us; 'He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord thy God requires of thee; namely, to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.' Mic. vi. 8. Indeed the ways of sin and error are full of windings and turnings, and a corrupt heart, or a false guide, may easily mislead us: here then are we to use our care and circumspection, to know our duty and to guide our feet into the ways of

truth and peace. To which end we are to read and search the Scriptures, which are the best rule to direct us; and 'having a sure word of prophecy, we shall do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place.' When we have by this means sought and found out the right way,

2dly, Our next care and circumspection must be to walk warily and circumspectly in it; and this we should the rather do, because of the many dangers and temptations, which even the best of men are exposed to. He that walks in the midst of snares had need look well to his going, lest he be entrapped by them; we must be great strangers to the world, if we observe not the artifices of seducers to draw men into errors in religion, and likewise the temptations of evil company, to entice them into a corruption of manners. These are two dangerous rocks, to be avoided by all that wish well to their own souls; and he that will sail safely between them, must carefully look about him, that he split not on either. This the apostle here intimates to be the case of these Ephesians; they had embraced Christianity, and so were in the right way to salvation, but they had many enemies that sought to corrupt their faith, or debauch their manners, and so were in danger of being lost in the crooked paths of sin and error; and therefore he lets them know, that all their care and watchfulness is little enough to provide against them: which is the same advice with that of our Saviour, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Matt. xxvi. 41.

3dly, To walk circumspectly is to take care to keep in the right way, and to persevere in it to the end, not to remit our diligence, nor grow weary of well-doing. We must not suffer either the allurements or discouragements of the world to turn us out of the way, either to the right hand or to the left, but must keep steadily on without fickleness or fainting. It is not enough to begin or set out at first, but we must hold on and continue to the last, if we mean to win the prize. 'We shall reap, (saith the apostle,) if we faint not;' and if we are 'faithful unto death, we shall receive a crown of life;' but if we faint and tire, or lose our way, we shall in the end reap nothing but shame and confusion.

In short, to walk circumspectly is to look every way about us, that we be not annoyed on any side, nor at any time tread awry; it is to look upward by hearty and fervent prayer, and downward by a diligent heeding our steps; it is to look forward by prudence and foresight to what is to come, and backward by serious reflection and consideration of what is past; to look inward, by watching our hearts, and keeping a guard over our thoughts; and outward, by a due regard to our words and actions; and, lastly, it is to look round about us, to prevent surprise, and to avoid all assaults. This is the duty here required.

Secondly, But what is the pattern or precedent here prescribed? Why, that is, 'Not as fools, but as wise.' There are

some that wholly neglect their watch, casting off all care and circumspection in their ways, and letting themselves loose to all manner of sin and wickedness, whereby they run themselves into many unnecessary troubles and dangers: these act like fools, and we are cautioned here not to follow or act like them. There are others that look carefully about them, weighing the nature and tendency of their actions, and using their best endeavours to prevent temptations, or provide against them, whereby they escape many evils that would otherwise befall them: these act like wise men, and such as these are here propounded to our imitation, and are worthy to be followed. And from hence we learn,—

1st, That a careless and dissolute life is the greatest folly, and they who cast off all due care of their ways, act like fools; which is so plain, that Solomon scarce ever gives them any other name: 'Fools (saith he) make a mock of sin;' and 'fools despise wisdom.' This he makes the proper style and character of all heedless and impenitent sinners, and justly too, for they run headlong upon the greatest dangers without any sense or consideration, and likewise prefer trifles and vanity before things of infinitely greater moment and concernment to them, which are known acts and instances of folly. Again,—

2dly, We learn hence, that a holy and circumspect walking is the truest wisdom, and they that narrowly observe and take heed to their ways, act like wise men: this Solomon likewise often tells us, for he makes the fear of God the beginning of wisdom; and the having it always before our eyes, the progress, the end, and the completion of it: this preserves from many unnecessary troubles here, and from eternal misery hereafter; which are high acts and instances of wisdom.

In short, the wisdom or folly of any is in nothing better seen, than in their care and choice of things: he that propounds to himself a good end, and pursues it by proper and suitable means, is by all men justly thought to act wisely; whereas he that either propounds to himself no end at all, or a very bad one, and hath no regard to the honesty or injustice of the means by which he follows it, must be owned by all to act very foolishly. Now, this is what the apostle here seeks to convince sinners of, that to live heedlessly and incautiously, without a due sense of the good or evil of our ways, is to be guilty of great folly; but to walk warily and 'circumspectly,' is to walk 'not as fools, but as wise.'

But, Thirdly, how may this be done? Why, the next words direct us to one good way or means tending thereunto; and that is, the 'redeeming of time.' Now, the redeeming of time cannot be meant of the recalling or regaining that time that is already past and gone, for that is impossible; but of the improving what remains to better advantage, and repairing that which we have lost by a double diligence in that which is to come: and there can be no better help to a wary and circumspect walking, than

by making a good use of those precious hours and opportunities, which, if lost or let slip, are never to be recovered. There are few or none have been so good husbands of their time, as not to mispend a great part of it. The doing nothing, and the doing of what is as good or rather worse than nothing, have taken up no small part of our days. Idleness, bad company, vain thoughts, words, and actions, have consumed many of our precious minutes. Now to redeem this time, is not by feeding ourselves with vain hopes of living it over again to spend it better, for that was never granted to any, but by being truly sensible and sorry for what is lost, and making a better use of what is left. The more we have mispent, the more should we bestir ourselves to redeem and repair it; the longer and farther we have been out of the way, the sooner should we return, and mend our pace after. The time and substance that have been squandered away in gaming, folly, and extravagance, must be repaired by acts of piety, devotion, and charity; and the unnecessary visits and vanities of the world be turned into the holy exercises of religion and virtue. 'The time past should suffice (saith the apostle) to have served divers lusts, and to walk according to the course of the world;' the rest of our days should be devoted to the service of God, and the salvation of our souls; and that will keep a watchful eye over our ways, and restrain all our wanderings.

But the redeeming the time here is by some thought to be what we call gaining of time, to save ourselves from any evil or danger that threatens; and this seems to be countenanced by

The reason or motive added in the next words, 'Because the days are evil;' intimating, that we should, by delays and all other prudent and lawful means, endeavour to escape those evils, which a wicked world would bring upon us. Now, the days may be said to be evil, in respect of the evil of sin, and the evil of suffering; upon both which accounts, the days in which the apostle wrote this epistle might be justly reckoned so; for there were some who sought to corrupt the faith and manners of these Ephesians, and there were others who raised persecutions against the orthodox Christians, and both of them concurred to make the days evil and troublesome; for which reason he wills them to walk circumspectly, to look well to their ways, and to use the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove, to avoid the dangers and difficulties that surrounded them. Neither are the days in which we live less evil and perilous; for we have too many who seek to seduce the people into errors and divisions, and we have others that threaten the peace and welfare of Church and State; so that we, too, have great need to use our utmost care and diligence, to be preserved from the traps and trials of an evil world, and to be kept holy and blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus.

From whence the apostle infers, in the next words, 'Wherefore be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord

is;' that is, be wary and cautious in all your behaviour, not running into needless dangers, nor declining necessary ones, but labouring to know what the Lord would have you both to do and suffer, choosing still to keep a good conscience, and rather to suffer than to sin against it. To which end,—

He farther exhorts to avoid all carnal and brutish sensualities, those especially that were used in the heathen bacchanals, to which the following words relate: 'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit;' that is, give no offence by any intemperance or excess, which will betray both your reason and religion; nor let your hearts be at any time overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, as the manner of the heathen is, even in their religious joy; but let your hearts be replenished with the graces and comforts of God's Holy Spirit, that your mirth and joy may be always spiritual; 'speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.' 'If any be merry, (saith St. James,) let him sing psalms;' let him express his mirth not in drunken catches, but in pious hymns, which at once edify and delight: and therefore our apostle would have us 'teach and admonish one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord.' Col. iii. 16. This is to begin the work of heaven here upon earth, to join with the holy angels above, and, by sounding forth the praises of our Maker, to prepare ourselves for the heavenly choir. And, indeed, nothing tends more to elevate our minds, to raise our affections above this world, and to give us some foretastes of heaven, than a frequent exercise and delight in this duty. To which the apostle adds,—

The great duty of thanksgiving, in the next words: 'Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where the virtue of thankfulness is made to extend to all times, and to all things. Adversity, as well as prosperity, hath its blessings and good ends, and therefore both are to be thanked for: in every thing give thanks, for they are all thankworthy. The object is God the Father, from whom all good things come; but through the name and for the sake of God the Son, by whose merits and mediation they are derived to us; to whom, therefore, we are in duty bound to give continual thanks, which is an act of justice as well as religion, and is attended with present pleasure, and an ample future reward.

Lastly, To promote this care and circumspection of our ways, we are exhorted to the great duty of submission, in the last words: 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' Which implies not only submission to superiors, who have the authority over us, and a power to command us in all lawful things; but to equals and inferiors, to whom we owe all the good offices of kindness and charity, complying with their infirmities, and yielding to all their reasonable desires and

necessities, and performing all the duties that appertain to the several conditions and orders of men.

This is the sum of the epistle for this day; from which we may learn to set a strict guard upon our ways, and to consider the nature and lawfulness of all our actions and designs, before we set about them: let us do nothing rashly, nor carelessly run into temptation; but do our best to avoid them, and to abstain from all occasions and appearances of evil. To which end,—

Let us often think of the end of our christian course, and have an eye to the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus, that we may run with patience the race that is set before us.

Finally, to conclude all, let us implore the aid and assistance of Heaven, to be directed and kept in the way that leads to it; often praying with the Psalmist, 'Shew me thy way, O Lord, and teach me thy paths; guide me in the way that I should go, and let me not wander from thy commandments.' And thus by walking circumspectly in the ways of holiness here, we shall ere long arrive at the regions of bliss and happiness hereafter: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLI.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW xxii. 1—14.—*Jesus said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king who made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come*, &c.

THIS gospel for the day contains a parable, in which, under the resemblance of a king's making a marriage for his son, and inviting many to it, is set forth the free and gracious offer of the gospel, together with the invaluable blessings and privileges of it; which offer was first made to the Jewish church and nation, and upon their refusal it was made to the Gentiles, and in them to all nations; adding withal, a severe sentence upon those that rejected this tender, or received it not as they should. All which things being here figuratively expressed, will require a little unfolding.

The parable begins thus: 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, who made a marriage for his son.' Where, by the 'kingdom of heaven,' is meant the christian church, or the state of the gospel, for which it is often taken in the New Testament. The King here meant is God the Father, the great Sovereign of the world, and the sole Maker and Disposer of all things. His Son is Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father before all worlds. The marriage here made was God the Father's giving his Son for the salvation of mankind; according to that of St. John, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,' To which the Son also gave his consent and

compliance; for he is said so to 'love the world, as to give himself to and for it.' This is here set forth by a 'marriage,' to shew the nearness of affection, and the dearness of the relation between them. Hence we find Christ often owning himself related to his church, as a husband to his spouse, as you may see throughout the book of Canticles; and God himself is said to be married to his people, Jer. iii. 14: 'Turn, ye backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you.'

This is the marriage here said to be made in which Christ gives himself to his church, and the church gives itself back again unto Christ, and so by nuptial and mutual endearments they become nearly joined and united to each other. St. Luke, in relating this parable, tells us, that this marriage was celebrated with a feast or wedding supper.' Luke xiv. And the same is implied here in St. Matthew; for the making a marriage, is often rendered by making a marriage-feast for his Son. Now by this feast here we are to understand the spiritual food of God's holy word and sacraments, the proper food and nourishment of the soul, and the fittest banquet for such a solemnity: it is expressed sometimes by 'a feast of fat things,' and sometimes by 'marrow and fatness,' the highest and best of all feeding. St. John, for its excellency, calls it 'meat indeed,' and 'drink indeed;' as also 'the living bread,' or 'the bread of life,' that came down from heaven: shewing how vastly it exceeds Moses's manna in the wilderness, and all earthly dainties; for none of these could preserve any from death, whereas this heavenly food not only does that, but cherisheth the soul to eternal life.

To this Divine gospel-feast, we read in the next verse of a gracious and generous invitation: for the King 'sent forth his servants, to call them that were bidden to the wedding.' Where, by the 'servants that were sent forth,' we are to understand the ministers of Christ, and the stewards of the mysteries of God: of whom Christ himself declares, 'As my Father sent me, so send I you.' They are commissioned by him, and sent as his servants; to whom he added this encouragement, 'He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me.'

But what was the errand upon which he sent his ministers and ambassadors? Why, it was 'to call them that were bidden to the wedding;' to invite them to come away to this great and glorious banquet, *i. e.* to the participation of God's holy word and sacraments; to accept of the offers of mercy, and the tenders of salvation made to them in the gospel; and to that end, to call upon them to hear the words of eternal life, and to receive that immortal food, that is able to save their souls. This is the message they were sent to deliver.

But what success had these messengers, or what answer was returned to him that sent them? Why, a very rude and ungrateful one indeed; 'They would not come.' Who could

have thought, that any should be so unthankful, as to refuse so kind an invitation? or that so much love should meet with such ingratitude? But so it was then, and so it is in a great measure to this day.

St. Luke makes their answer a little more civil, though it was in effect the same; for he tells us, 'They all with one consent began to make excuses: one had bought a piece of ground, and must needs go and see it, and so prayed to be excused: another had bought five yoke of oxen, and was going to prove them, and for that reason prayed to be excused: another had married a wife, and he could not come.' All which frivolous excuses betrayed not only a coldness, but a contempt of the invitation. The design of all this is, to represent the great obstinacy and perverseness of the Jews, in rejecting the doctrine of Christ, in despising his miracles, and refusing all overtures of grace and mercy that could be made to them.

But how did the king resent these slights and indignities offered to him? Why, he was not presently moved to indignation, but bore with them awhile, and was willing to try them again; for the next words tell us, that 'he sent forth other servants, saying, tell them who are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.' He changed his messengers, lest they should have any prejudices against the former, and sent other ambassadors to treat with them, letting them know, that their master had prepared an entertainment for them, and that all things were ready for their reception, and that nothing was wanting but the guests to sit down and partake of it: which is in effect the same that St. Paul told the Corinthians, 'Christ our passover is sacrificed for us, come therefore and keep the feast.'

But how was this second message received? Why, much like the former; for 'they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.' Their worldly business engrossed all their time and thoughts, and they had none of them to spare upon other, though more heavenly matters: their minds were set upon earthly profits and preferments, and looked chiefly how they might prosper and be promoted in this world, and therefore cared not for a Messiah, who only talked of advancing them in another. Yea, there was a worse matter in it than this, for they handled these other servants worse than the first; so the following words tell us, 'The remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. One would think, if they would not come to the feast, they might have had so much manners as to have returned thanks for the invitation, and to treat the messengers civilly, who came upon so kind an errand. But instead of that, they abused and persecuted them; yea, they used them barbarously and killed them. This passage relates to the Jews' barbarous usage of the prophets and

apostles that were sent unto them, of which our Saviour most pathetically reminds them, Matt. xxiii. 37. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?' Where we see how tenderly Christ resented their wicked and inhuman carriage towards his servants, as he still does all ill-treatment of his ministers.

But how did the king take these repeated refusals of his offers, and the cruel usage of his messengers? Why that the next words declare; 'When the king heard thereof, he was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city.' Their stubborn and incorrigible ingratitude kindled his wrath against them, and when the ministers he sent to them could not prevail to win them, he sent forth his armies to destroy them, and to burn their city. The armies he sent forth were the Romans, who were the executioners of God's vengeance upon them; for they destroyed the murderers that slew his servants, sacked Jerusalem, and laid both the temple and city in ashes. 'Behold (saith our Saviour) your house is left unto you desolate,' and all things are fallen to utter ruin. Which made him, 'when he drew near the city, weep over it, saying, O that thou hadst known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.'

This is the first part of this parable, which contains the many gracious offers of mercy and pardon made to God's own people, the Jews, together with their wilful refusal of them all, and God's utter rejection of them for their obstinate infidelity and unbelief.

The second part of it refers to God's calling in of the Gentiles, and taking them within the pale of his Church, who were before aliens and strangers. And that begins in the next verse: 'Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they who were bidden were not worthy; go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage:' meaning, that though all things are prepared for this wedding, or gospel-feast, yet the principal guests that were invited, are not prepared for it; and having by their wilful contempt shewed themselves unworthy of it, they shall be waited for no longer. Go ye therefore into the highways, where the heathens and gentiles walk; and how vile soever they may seem in your eyes, bring them in to the feast. St. Luke expresses it thus; 'Go ye quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind.' All that you meet with, whether poor or rich, gentle or simple, preach the gospel to them, and invite them to the feast. Here is God Almighty's free and general invitation to all people and nations, to come in and accept of the grace and favour of the gospel. 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, come buy and eat; yea, come

buy wine and milk without money and without price.' The apostles' commission was, Go and preach to all nations, make disciples of them, and bring them to me. Which commission they executed, as the next words tell us: 'So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good; and the wedding was furnished with guests.' This was the calling in of the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs and partakers of the manifold grace of God. Before, 'in Jewry only was God known, and his name was great in Israel. At Salem was his tabernacle, and his dwelling in Zion: he had not dealt so with other nations, neither had the heathens the knowledge of his law.' The Gentiles were excluded by a 'partition-wall' from the privileges of the temple, and were so many outcasts and 'strangers from the covenant of promise;' but here this enclosure was broken down, and both Jew and Gentile became 'all one in Christ Jesus.'

The Church now receives all, both bad and good, base and honourable, hypocrites as well as sincere Christians. But yet Christ knows the one from the other, and will make a distinction between them. For it follows, in the next verse, that 'when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment;' that is, he found there one that came not so well dressed and prepared as he should be, to the sacred solemnity of such a feast. Here, by a wedding garment, we are not to understand any outward attire, vestment, or habit of the body: for Christ looks not much to that, though too many else do; but the wedding garment here refers to the inward dress and ornaments of the soul. The person here spoken of had not his mind furnished with knowledge, to discern the Lord's body; nor his heart with grace, spiritually to feed upon it: his soul was not so clothed with humility, as to be sensible of his sins, or sorry for them: he had not on the robes of any real righteousness, either inherent or imputed: he came not to this holy table as he ought, with the garments of praise and thanksgiving for the mercies promised and conveyed by it. This undressed or unprepared person fell under the sharp rebuke of the Master of the feast; who said unto him, 'Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? and he was speechless.'

The entertainer found one of the newly-received Gentiles crowding into the feast in his heathenish vices and practices, without putting off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, or putting on the new man, which is renewed in righteousness and true holiness; and having found him, he expostulates the matter with him, how he durst venture upon so holy a feast in so unworthy and unholy a manner: and being pressed home with it, he was struck dumb, and had nothing to say in answer or excuse for his rudeness. And therefore his doom was pronounced in the next words, 'Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and

cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' This will be the sad doom of all unworthy receivers of God's holy word and sacraments: they will be for ever deprived of the light and comfort of both, and be sentenced to outer and eternal darkness: so that it is not all who come to this feast, that will find a welcome; for as the Jews were rejected and punished with utter excision, for not coming to it at all, so the intruding Gentile was rebuked and punished with damnation for coming to it unworthily.

To all which it is added in the close, that 'many are called, but few are chosen;' that is, many are called to the external privileges of the gospel, that are not inwardly and effectually called or converted by them; which makes the number of those small, who are the chosen vessels fitted for glory, and sealed by the Holy Spirit to eternal life.

Thus we see the sense and scope of this parable, appointed to be read as the gospel for this day; from which we may infer many useful and profitable lessons. As,—

1. From the free general invitation to this gospel-feast, we learn the transcendent love of God to mankind, in making such ample and excellent provision for them, and then courting them to accept it. He gave us his Son to espouse our cause, and to be in a manner contracted and married to us; who furnished a table, to keep a fellowship and correspondence with us, loving us to the very death, and instituting a feast in remembrance of it: to which he is pleased to invite all men without exception, sending his servants or ministers to call and compel them to come in to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. And what unparalleled instances of love are these! 'God so loved the world (saith St. John) that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And elsewhere, 'Behold what manner of love is this, wherewith the Father hath loved us!' St. Paul, like one in a rapture at the thoughts of it, cries out, 'Oh, the height and depth, and breadth and length of the love of God, that passeth knowledge!' Which should teach us not only to admire, but readily to accept, and answer the design of it.

2. From God's renewing his invitation to the Jews, upon their first refusal, and sending other servants to call and woo them to the wedding; we learn not only the great love, but the great patience and long-suffering of God towards them. Like an importunate lover, he gave not out upon the first denial, but renewed his suit, and sent other ambassadors to beseech them to be reconciled and come. He did not punish the contempt of his grace and his word presently, but expected to see whether they would repent and comply; which shews his infinite tenderness and forbearance.

3. From their standing out and refusing all these calls and obligations, we learn their prodigious obstinacy and ingratitude,

that nothing could prevail or work upon them; neither the tenderest bowels, nor the most importunate entreaties, nor the largest offers of mercy or kindness, could win them to any compliance. And there are but too many such monsters still, who can resist all these charms, and turn a deaf ear to all the calls and invitations of the gospel.

4. We learn hence, the justice of God in punishing these Jews with utter rejection, for their incorrigible obstinacy and disobedience. When men have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and become so obdurate and hardened in them that nothing can reclaim or amend them; then do they become ripe for destruction, and leave themselves without excuse or remedy. This was the case of the Jews, and will be the sad fate of all stubborn and impenitent sinners.

5. From the excuses made in the parable for not coming to the marriage-feast, we learn that earthly-mindedness and an inordinate love of this world, is the main hindrance from the pursuit of better and more heavenly matters; for all their excuses were taken from thence: one went to his farm, and another to his merchandise; one had a piece of ground to see, another a yoke of oxen to try, and another was kept from coming by his wife; and all these made light of Christ by hearkening to mammon; and so preferred the perishing trifles of earth before the everlasting treasures of heaven. But such pretences cannot but appear vain and frivolous at present, and will rather aggravate than avail any thing at the last day.

6. From the severe punishment inflicted on the Jews for not coming to this wedding supper, we learn the great danger of absenting ourselves from God's holy word and sacraments. They who refused to come to the feast of the Passover were to be cut off from among the people, Exod. xii.; and they who here rejected the dainties of the gospel, were rejected themselves, and utterly cast off for ever; which should make us afraid of wilfully abstaining from the Lord's table, or refusing the bread of life, that is there tendered to us.

7. From the dreadful sentence pronounced against him, who came to this feast without a wedding garment, we may learn the extreme danger, as of not coming at all, so of coming to it unworthily. The danger is exceeding great on both sides; for he that cometh not at all, starves his soul, by withholding from it its proper food; and he that cometh unworthily, poisons his soul, by corrupting this sacred nourishment; death and damnation will be the certain end and issue of both. To prevent which sad events, let us take care to prepare ourselves beforehand by faith and repentance, and then reverently approach this holy table with a sacred hunger and thirst after righteousness, and then we may be sure to be filled. Let us put on our wedding garment, which consists not in the finery of outward attire, of which many are careful enough, but in the inward ornaments of

a meek, humble, and quiet spirit, which are, in the sight of God, of great price.

Lastly, From the concluding words of the parable, 'Many are called, but few are chosen,' let us learn not to depend wholly upon the outward call to the privileges of the gospel, but labour to be inwardly called by the renewing of our minds, that we may be found in the number of those that are chosen to eternal life.

DISCOURSE CCXLII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE ONE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EPHES. vi. 10—21.—*My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers*, &c.

THE petitions we offer up in the collect for this day are for pardon and peace; that being cleansed from all our sins, we may serve God with a quiet mind. To obtain which,

The epistle for the day begins with an exhortation to 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;' that is, to be confirmed in the faith of Christ, to be fortified with grace and spiritual strength from him, and to labour for such a firmness and constancy of mind, as may carry us above and beyond all temptations.

To which end the next words exhort us, to 'put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; that is, to make use of all defensatives and weapons that Christ hath furnished us with, to repel the stratagems and devices of Satan; and that because 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood,' *i. e.* against human and ordinary enemies, 'but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickednesses in high places;' that is, against the several ranks of evil spirits that hover in the air, and haunt the earth; against the God of this world, who seeks to blind the minds of them that believe not, and against the dangerous sins of pride, envy, and malice, which seat themselves on high. And because this combat is attended with many and great difficulties from the power and subtlety of the adversaries, the same advice is renewed in the next words; 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' What this armour of God is, we shall see by and by; the use whereof is, to withstand all temptations in the evil day of persecution, affliction, or any other trial that we may be exercised withal; and having done our utmost, to stand, which you

know is the posture of conquerors, who are wont to stand and keep their ground when the vanquished run away, or fall before them. Accordingly the General or Captain of our salvation once more commands all his followers to stand, 'Stand therefore;' which is elsewhere expressed by 'quitting yourselves like men,' and 'enduring hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' And this gives us to understand, that a christian life is a spiritual warfare; we enter upon it in our baptism, at which time we list ourselves under Christ's banner, and solemnly engage to be his faithful soldiers and servants to our lives' end. The enemies we engage against, are, the enemies of Christ and our own salvation, viz. the devil, the world, and the flesh; against all which we are entered into a holy war, and bid an open defiance to them at our entrance upon Christianity.

The devil, with his accursed crew of evil spirits, having revolted from their Maker, are still seeking to draw us into the same conspiracy; they tempt us to pride, the sin by which they fell, to bring us into the same condemnation; they solicit us to unbelief, disobedience, and all other wickedness, whom we therefore 'renounce with all his works.'

The world too sets upon us with many charms and temptations; it hath smiles to allure, and frowns to affright us from our duty; which should make us to look about us, lest we be ensnared or inveigled by them: and therefore St. John seeks to take off our 'love from the world, and the things of it,' that we may fix it on God; the love of both being inconsistent with each other, 1 John iii. 16. Yea, our Saviour wills us to hate and despise the world, when it stands in competition with God, and not to suffer ourselves to be led away by any of its allurements.

The flesh likewise is still enticing and importuning of us to evil, and seeks many ways to circumvent and betray us. This is an enemy in our bosom, and so the more dangerous, because it secretly assaults us within; its darts are invisible, and wound without being seen; it oftens joins issue with Satan and the world, and too frequently yields us up into their hands: and therefore we are commanded 'to mortify, resist, and abstain from all fleshly lusts,' because 'they war against the soul,' 1 Pet. ii. 11.

These are the enemies that we are to encounter in this warfare, which are all of them vigilant, subtle, fierce and formidable. The devil, for his rage and diligence, is compared to a 'roaring lion, going up and down, seeking whom he may devour.' For his subtlety he is called 'the old serpent,' that beguiled our first parents in Paradise, and hath been still seducing their posterity ever since; and therefore St. Peter adviseth Christians 'to be sober and vigilant,' daily watching against his devices, 1 Pet. v. 8. The world is that great sorcerer that bewitches mankind with its enchantments, and therefore we are deeply concerned to renounce all its pomps and vanities.

'Our own hearts too are deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;' which we should therefore 'keep with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life,' as the wise man tells us, Prov. iv. 23. Of these enemies we are forewarned, that we may be forearmed against them: and the rather, because their designs are cruel and mischievous: they watch for our souls, not to save but to destroy them; they conceal their cruelty under a disguise of kindness, and when they seem to please most, are most eager upon their prey, whom we are therefore to watch and arm ourselves against.

But what is the armour we are here bid to put on to this end? or what are the weapons to be made use of in this warfare? Why, that is set forth to us in the following part of the chapter, where St. Paul prescribes a 'helmet' for the head, 'a breast-plate' for the belly, 'a shield' for the back, 'a girdle' for the loins, 'a sword' for the hand, and 'shoes' for the feet; thus arming Christians cap-à-piè, and furnishing them throughout from head to feet: all which terms, being figurative and metaphorical, will require some explication; for our apostle tells us, that 'the weapons of this warfare are not carnal, for though we walk in the flesh, we war not after the flesh.' But these weapons are spiritual, being levelled against ghostly enemies and spiritual wickednesses in high places; and these 'are mighty through God, to the pulling down of these strongholds, to the casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,' 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. If you would know what this spiritual armour is, we have here a particular account of each part of it. As,—

1st, The first piece of armour we are here bid to put on, is the girdle of truth, in these words, 'having your loins girt with truth,' ver. 14. Now this girdle of truth is generally expounded of the sound and saving knowledge of heavenly truths. St. Peter expresses it by 'girding up the loins of the mind,' 1 Peter i. 13. That is, by fortifying it with wisdom and understanding; that so knowing what the will of the Lord is, and what the devices of our enemies are, we may the better adhere to the one, and avoid the other. By this we shall be directed in the whole course of our lives, and likewise instructed in the wiles of the devil to turn us out of it, which will help much to arm ourselves against them; nor will Satan be able to get any advantage upon us, when 'we are not ignorant of his devices,' 2 Cor. ii. 11. And this is called 'the girdle of truth,' because it fastens all divine truths upon the mind; for as the girdle ties and keeps on the other armour, and fits us for the use of it, so knowledge tends to keep us in the ways of truth, and preserves all other virtues; and therefore we are in the first place to have the loins of our mind girt with truth, and that will keep it from running into error or licentiousness, as a girdle restrains and keeps in the body.

Moreover, to have the loins girt, in Scripture, signifies strength, vigour, and activity in any undertaking: 'I will strengthen him with a girdle,' saith God, Isa. xxii. 21. This was the use of the military belt or girdle, to keep the body more tight and fit for action. And to this the apostle here chiefly refers, in 'having our loins girt with truth,' by keeping to sound doctrine, in opposition to all errors and heresies; which will serve as a girdle to tie all our spiritual armour close about us. And this is the first piece of the armour.

The 2d is the breast-plate of righteousness, in the next words, 'having on the breast-plate of righteousness;' where the apostle alludes to that of the prophet Isaiah, chap. lix. 17; where God is said to 'put on righteousness as a breast-plate.' By this we are to understand that integrity of heart, that is to accompany the soundness of our mind: for it is not enough to have the 'light' of divine truths shining into our minds, to preserve us from error; but we must have the 'love' of them too 'shed abroad into our hearts,' to keep us from all unrighteousness. 'Knowledge alone puffeth up,' and that will lead us into the snare and condemnation of the devil, and give our enemies great advantage over us; but 'charity' and the love of virtue 'edifieth,' and that will set us above the reach and danger of all their assaults; for which reason we are not only to gird up our minds with the knowledge of the truth, but to guard our hearts with the armour of righteousness, having on the breast-plate of a good conscience, which will be as a brazen wall to repel all the power and force of temptation. In short, we are to add to our knowledge virtue, and to have our hearts established with grace, and that will defend us from the danger of our enemies, as a breast-plate doth from the darts of an assailant: which is the second part of this armour.

The 3d piece of it is 'to have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' ver. 15; where the apostle alludes to the custom both of the Grecians and Romans, who were wont to reckon shoes in the account of their armour, which were ordinarily made of brass. In the story of Goliah, we read that he had 'greaves of brass upon his legs.' 1 Sam. xvii. 6. And Homer furnishes out Achilles, and other warriors, with boots or shoes of brass or iron on their feet; the use whereof was to defend their feet against the traps and sharp stakes which the enemies were wont to lay in the way to stop their march. Indeed, the putting on of shoes, in Scripture, signifies a readiness and preparation for a journey. Hence the Israelites were commanded to eat the Passover with 'their loins girt, with shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand,' to denote their readiness for the march. Exod. xii. 11. And our Saviour willed his disciples to be shod with sandals to the same purpose. Mark vi. 9.

Now, to this the apostle here refers, in making the gospel of

peace the best furniture and preparation for our feet; for the peace and love required in the gospel will best fit us for our christian course; it will make us go on more expeditely in our way, and defend us from the dangers we may meet with in it.

4thly, Another principal piece of this armour is 'the shield of faith,' which we are therefore chiefly required to put on: ver. 16, 'Above all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.' By faith here we are to understand a firm persuasion of the truth of our religion, or a steadfast belief of the gospel, with all the promises and threats contained therein. This is here called 'the shield of faith,' being the principal defence of a Christian against all the fiery darts of Satan's temptations, and likewise the main weapon wherewith we are to combat the world and our own lusts. This will defeat all the designs of the devil, and render us invulnerable in our conflict with him: and St. John assures us, that 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' 1 John v. 4. To this the author to the Hebrews ascribes all the victories and triumphs of those glorious heroes, mentioned in the 11th chapter of that epistle; who, by this irresistible weapon of faith, conquered the greatest difficulties, and repelled the force of the strongest temptations: 'By faith (saith he) they wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,' &c. He that truly believes the great and noble rewards of virtue, together with the dreadful punishments that attend all vicious courses, will be powerfully persuaded to follow the one, and forsake the other; no poisoned darts can enter, no flatteries, fears, or frowns can shake the constancy of a mind fortified with this persuasion; the shield of faith will quench all these fiery darts, and defend us from all evil.

5thly, Another piece of armour that we are to put on, is 'the helmet of salvation:' ver. 17, 'And take the helmet of salvation.' Now this is interpreted by the apostle to be 'the hope of salvation,' 1 Thess. v. 8; for as a helmet preserves the head from the violence of a blow, at least from being wounded or hurt by it; so hope keeps the soul from all real harm, and secures it from the danger of all assaults. This hope is elsewhere called 'the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,' Heb. vi. 19; for as an anchor fastens a ship, and keeps it from being tossed and shipwrecked by the waves; so the hope of salvation fixes the soul on God in the greatest storms of the world, and keeps it from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience: it supports it under all earthly troubles and persecutions, and prepares it for the endless joys and happiness of heaven; for 'he that hath this hope (saith the apostle) purifies himself, even as He is pure.' 1 John iii. 3.

6thly, The next piece of the christian armour is 'the sword of the Spirit,' which the apostle expounds to be 'the word of God,'

ver. 17. A sword, you know, serves both to defend and to destroy; it secures the person, and wounds the assailant: in like manner, this sword of the Spirit guards us from error, and confounds all the enemies of the truth. Hence the author to the Hebrews styles the word of God 'A two-edged sword, quick and powerful, dividing asunder between the joints and the marrow, the soul and the spirit, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Chap. iv. 11. This weapon our Saviour made use of in his conflict with the devil, baffling all his temptations out of the word of God, and repelling every assault with 'It is written:' and the same weapon we are to use against all the enemies of truth, confuting their errors by the word of God, and cutting down heresies and divisions by this sword of the Spirit.

Lastly, To all this the apostle adds prayer, to complete the armour, and to render it successful: ver. 18, 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.' It is this gives the success and efficacy to all the rest, by calling in the assistance of Heaven to our succour, and fortifying our weakness by the auxiliaries of divine grace. And this he would have done, not only now and then by fits and starts, but 'always, watching thereunto with all perseverance;' lest, by neglecting our watch and our prayers, the devil take hold of the opportunity, and get an advantage upon us. And therefore our Saviour bids us to 'watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation:' and this with all sorts of prayer, viz., petition, thanksgiving, 'and supplication in the Spirit,' that we may 'find grace to help in time of need.' Neither are these prayers to be confined to ourselves, but to extend to all others, 'making supplication for all saints;' among whom the apostle wills these Ephesians to put up a petition for him, viz., for knowledge and boldness in the delivery of his message: ver. 19, 'And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.' And the rather, because he was then 'an ambassador in bonds,' for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. And that he might not be discouraged by his sufferings for them, he would have them to be mindful of him in their prayers, that he might not be daunted, but 'speak boldly, as he ought to speak.'

This is briefly the sum of the epistle for this day, which contains the armour that Christians are to be furnished withal in their spiritual warfare with ghostly enemies. All that remains, is to exhort all Christians to take and put on this armour, that they may be able to withstand the evil one, and to stand too in the evil day. We see we are all engaged in a holy war with the devil, the world, and the flesh; and that these are all powerful, cunning, and dangerous foes, apt to inveigle, betray, and undo us; and therefore it stands us upon to arm ourselves as well as we can against them. Our Saviour willeth him that goeth to

war, to sit down and consider the number and forces of his enemy, and whether he be able to meet him with a greater or lesser strength, lest he be foiled, and miscarry through his own inconsideration. And as this is to be done in ordinary battles, so is it much more to be minded in these spiritual conflicts; where, as the honour of the victory, so the danger of the defeat is much greater. Let us, then, manfully set ourselves against those enemies, against whom we have lifted ourselves, and proclaimed open war. Our apostle, we see, hath furnished us with armour both offensive and defensive, in the use whereof we may be assured of success, and to come off 'more than conquerors through Christ that loveth us.' If we stand our ground, we are sure to win the field, and to be crowned at last with a glorious victory; so we are told by the Captain of our salvation, 'Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life:' and so St. Paul found by experience, who having 'fought the good fight of faith, and finished his course with patience, had a crown laid up for him, which God the righteous Judge will give to him, and to all that love and look for his appearance.' 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

Wherefore, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and put on the whole armour of God, viz., 'the girdle of truth,' that ye may know the truth as it is in Jesus; 'the breast-plate of righteousness,' to guard you from all iniquity: have your 'feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' that you may run the paths of God's commandments: take to you 'the shield of faith,' that will defend you from all the darts and devices of the devil: put on 'the helmet or hope of salvation,' to quicken you in the ways of virtue; and forget not 'the sword of the Spirit,' to preserve you from all vice and error. To all which add fervent prayer and supplication, for a blessing upon all these; so shall ye be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

DISCOURSE CCXLIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE ONE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOHN iv. 46, to the end. — *There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum; when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death,* &c.

THE gospel for the day contains a relation of a miracle, wrought on a certain nobleman's son, who lay sick at Capernaum, his own city, the place of his principal residence, where many of his miracles were done. The relation of it begins thus: 'There was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum; when he heard that Jesus was come there, he went unto him,' &c. Where

we may observe, that the report of his miracles drew persons of all ranks and qualities unto him, rich and poor, honourable and mean; some of all sorts came to see and partake of the influence of his sanative or healing power. Here we find a certain nobleman coming to him, who, as some translators tell us, was a royal officer, viz., one of Herod the Tetrarch's principal officers, who was at that time king of the country of Galilee. And elsewhere we read of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, drawing nigh to him, led by the fame of his mighty works. John iii. 1, 2.

It is true, indeed, Christ, in the beginning of his ministry, called only fishermen and mechanics, the meanest and most illiterate persons, to be his disciples and followers; to shew his doctrine to be purely divine, without any mixture of art, human power, or policy, to carry it on, of which their great ignorance and simplicity could not give the least colour of suspicion. This is the sense of St. Paul in these words: 'Not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; and the base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.' 1 Cor. i. 16. And by such weak and contemptible means in the eyes of men, the word of God mightily grew and prevailed; and being thus spread and confirmed by miracles, it drew in proselytes in all places, and of all ranks and conditions; among the rest, our nobleman or courtier in the text, believed and came to him. But what was his errand? Why, 'he besought him, that he would come down, and heal his son;' and this he did by reason of the extremity of his sickness, 'for he was at the point of death:' he had before tried all the arts of physic, and the skill of physicians, but all in vain; nothing appeared in him but death, which made him to have recourse to our Saviour, beseeching him to effect that cure on his son by a Divine power, which was no otherwise to be done.

'Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.' Our Saviour perceived that this nobleman's faith depended mainly upon the report of his miracles, that it was the seeing or hearing of them that brought him to him; and unless he did see some wonder or other before him, his faith would grow weak, if not die away. 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe;' where he seems to blame this nobleman for what he more sharply reproved in the Pharisees, who, asking 'a sign' from him, answered, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given it but the sign of the prophet Jonas,' &c. Matt. xii. 38, 39. Where he doth not altogether condemn all asking for a sign; for it being foretold of the Messias, that he should come with miracles, signs, and great wonders, they might well enough ask a sign or miracle of him for their satisfaction: and therefore we

find him often appealing to his miracles for the truth of his mission, and calling upon the world to believe him, if not for his own, yet for his works' sake. 'If I had not done the works among them (saith he) which no man else did, they had not had sin,' *i. e.* in not believing me. John xv. 24. It was not, then, the expectation of miracles that our Saviour rebuked in them, but their desiring them for wrong ends, and their being unsatisfied in the kind and nature of them: they must have some wonder done, more to please their fancy than to confirm their faith; all the miracles he had done on earth would not satisfy, but they must have a sign or prodigy from heaven; that is, some blazing sight or show in the air, to feed their eyes, and set the world a-gazing. It was their hypocrisy and unbelief, their curiosity and incredulity, that Christ there condemned, and therefore would not gratify their vain humours in doing more, when he had done enough already for their conviction, if they had any mind to believe; for such as these, he tells them, he had but one miracle more, and, instead of a sign from heaven, they should have only one from the earth, viz., the sign of the prophet Jonas, who was a token or type of Christ's resurrection from the dead, the last and greatest of all miracles: for as Jonas lay three days buried in the whale's belly, and then came to life again, so should the Son of Man lie three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, and then rise again from the dead. And if that miracle would not convince them, nothing could, and so they must be sealed up under final impenitence and infidelity. This was the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, those monsters of unbelief and hypocrisy.

But our nobleman in the text was not so faithless or unbelieving; he desired indeed a sign, but he was convinced and converted by it; he did not ask it to gratify his curiosity, but to strengthen his faith, and to be the more firmly persuaded of his power to heal his son. And therefore he renewed his request unto him, saying, 'Sir, come down ere my child die.' Christ perceived the increase of his faith by the earnestness of his suit: he found his belief of his power grew stronger and stronger, and that he was well assured of his ability to cure his son, though left by all physicians; and without the aid of his Divine power, the case was desperate, and without remedy. Jesus perceiving all this, and willing farther to encourage the increase of his faith, saith unto him, 'Go thy way, thy son liveth;' *i. e.* return home as speedily and cheerfully as thou canst; and when thou comest to thy house, thou shalt find thy son alive and in good health: words full of comfort to one pressed with grief, and fear of losing his beloved son.

But what influence had these words on the nobleman to whom they were spoken? Why, a very good one; for the next words tells us, that 'the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.' He was fully persuaded of the truth of what Christ had told him, and staggered not

through unbelief or distrust concerning it, but went his way homeward with a heart full of joy, and free from all doubts and fears concerning his son.

And the event proved accordingly; for 'as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth.' And when he came to his house, he found his son not only recovered, but perfectly sound and well as he was before. And the better to satisfy himself in the circumstances of this extraordinary cure, he 'inquired of his servants the hour when he began to amend,' to see whether it answered the time in which He spake those words to him: 'And they said unto him, It was yesterday at the seventh hour, that the fever left him;' by which answer, 'the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth:' the circumstance of time making the cure so much the more remarkable.

This is the miracle here related in all its circumstances, which was exceeding great, considering the extreme sickness of the person, who was at the point of death, and so left for dead by all that acted by the natural and artificial ways of medicine; so that the recovery of him was the saving of one from the grave, who was just dropping into it, and in a manner raising him from the dead.

But what effect had this miracle upon the nobleman, at whose request it was done? Why, that the following words tell us; 'He himself believed, and his whole house.' He concluded, that the cure wrought upon his son could not be done but by a Divine power, and that likewise was a sufficient demonstration, that the doctrine delivered by him must be also Divine; for miracles being the seal of a Divine commission, he very well thought that God would never set it to an impostor, nor empower any to do those things, but one that comes from him. And therefore he truly enough took him for the Messias, and believed in him, making an open profession of his faith in him, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world. And this he did not only for himself, in his own person, but in the name of all his family, who embraced the same faith, and became proselytes to, and followers of our Saviour; for so it is said, that 'he himself believed, and his whole house.' The like we read of Nicodemus, another great man, and ruler among the Jews, who was convinced and proselyted by the same means, owning Christ to be a great prophet sent from God. John iii. 2. 'Rabbi (saith he) I know thou art a teacher come from God, for no man could do the works that thou dost, except God were with him.' And before him many of the Jews, that were at Jerusalem, believed in him, when they saw the miracles which he did. John ii. 23. So vain was that cavil of the people, 'Have any of the rulers believed on him?' since the nobleman in the text, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, and Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, with many others, became his disciples. Acts xviii. 8. And

indeed his miracles were great enough to convince the world, that he was the person prophesied of, and promised to come for the salvation of mankind. This was the end of all the miracles he did, which far exceeded all that was done by Moses, or Elias, or any of the prophets that went before him, both in the nature, number, and manner of doing them.

As for the nature of his miracles, they consisted in raising the dead, and doing other supernatural works, which no mere man ever did or could do, of which we have many instances in the gospel; but the wonder of all wonders was the raising himself from the dead, after he had lain three days in the grave. This was foretold by the prophets, and spoken of by himself before his death, saying, 'Destroy this temple,' meaning his body, 'and in three days I will raise it up;' which he accordingly did, to the terror of his enemies, and the joy of all his friends and followers.

And as his miracles exceeded those of Moses and the prophets in the nature of them, so did they in their number too; Moses did some few miracles, but Christ vastly more, as well as greater. Elias indeed raised one from the dead, but Christ many, and among them one that had lain four days in the grave: beside which, he raised to life the widow's son of the city of Nain; he restored to life the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue; with many more, mentioned in some of the foregoing gospels.

Lastly, Christ's miracles exceeded all others in the manner of doing them; for he did them with a look, with a word, with a touch, and many other ways, which could have no natural force or energy to the producing those effects. He raised Lazarus from the grave only by saying, 'Lazarus, come forth;' he restored the widow's son at Nain only by 'touching the bier;' he raised the daughter of Jairus, by taking her by the hand, and bidding her 'arise.' Moses fed some of the Israelites with bread from heaven, but Christ multiplied upon earth a few loaves and fishes to the feeding of many thousands; and there remained more after they were all filled, than was at first set before them. The event of all which was, that many believed on him, as this nobleman here did with all his house.

But the atheists and infidels of our age have started two difficulties about this matter, that must be a little removed.

The one is about the truth and certainty of these miracles.

The other is about the way of distinguishing true and real miracles from those that are false and feigned.

For the first, the clearest evidence that can be given of any matter of fact, is the testimony of such persons as were eye-witnesses of it; and this evidence we have for the mighty works and actions of our blessed Saviour. The things they attested were such as might be fully perceived by them that saw them; they were no illusions of the senses, but real and visible miracles. The

man that was born blind, was known to be so by all the country where he lived; and his being restored to sight was after as public as his former blindness, and was so acknowledged by all about him: insomuch that the blind man saw more than the whole Sanhedrim; for when they said, 'Moses we know, but for this fellow,' meaning Christ, 'we know not from whence he is;' he replied to them, 'Why, this is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened my eyes. If he were not of God, he could do nothing, for God heareth not sinners; but if any be sent by God, and doth his will, him he heareth:' by which he plainly attested his Divine commission. The dead man at Nain was known to be so, not only by the bearers, who were carrying him to his grave, but by the neighbouring people, who were attending upon his funeral; and his coming to life again, upon Christ's touching the bier, was as visible and attested by all that were present; and so St. Luke tells us, 'It was done before much people.' Luke vii. 12.

But the great miracle of Christ's resurrection, upon which the truth and certainty of all the rest depend, was attested by so many eye-witnesses, as set it out of the reach of all doubt and contradiction. Of his death and burial both Jews and Romans were eye-witnesses. The soldiers that came to break his bones, forbore it, because they found him already dead. That he returned to life again the third day, was attested not only by his apostles and disciples, but by many other witnesses who saw and conversed with him after his rising from the dead. That he was not a mere phantasm or apparition (as some objected) appeared by the disciples handling and seeing him; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as they saw him to have. And that he rose in the same real body, in which he died, was evident by the great incredulity of St. Thomas, who thrust his hand into the hole of his side, and saw the print of the nails in his hands and feet, which fastened him to the cross; and so became no longer faithless, but believing. To all which, if we add the number and concurrence of these witnesses, their great care and fidelity in relating them, their great courage and constancy in propagating them, notwithstanding all the threats and terrors to hinder them, together with the great success and general belief they have gained everywhere; we may safely conclude the evidence of them to be set beyond all reasonable doubts or distrust of the truth of them, and to cut off all the pleas and pretences of infidelity.

But how may we distinguish true miracles from false and counterfeit ones? For we read that the magicians imitated the miracles of Moses, and did many wonderful things like him. In the New Testament we are told that Satan and many false prophets should come with signs, and miracles, and lying wonders, and with that deceivableness of unrighteousness, as if it were possible to deceive the very elect. It is requisite therefore to give some

marks for the knowing one from the other, without which the argument from miracles would lose all its force. In answer hereunto, regard must be had to the doctrine which miracles are brought to confirm: if they are brought to confirm no doctrine at all, or a doctrine that hath been thoroughly confirmed already, we may conclude them to be false and lying wonders; for the end of miracles being to seal a Divine revelation, for God to work miracles, where no Divine truth is to be confirmed, would be for him to set the broad seal of heaven to a blank: and for the Spirit of God thus to confirm a revelation that hath been already confirmed, would be to exert its Divine power to no purpose, and to do such great things in vain; which is absurd and irrational to imagine.

Again, if any pretend to miracles to confirm any false doctrine, we may conclude them to be but juggles and impostures; for as God sets not his seal to a blank, so much less to a lie: and therefore we read, that if any false prophet foretold things to come, or shewed any sign or wonder, though the thing came to pass, yet, if he persuaded to idolatry, or any evil course, he was to be rejected as an impostor; and the apostle tells us, that if any preach any other doctrine, than that we have, though he pretend to miracles, yea, though he were an angel from heaven, he was to be accursed.

Moreover, true miracles may be known from false by the circumstances and manner of their operation. Feigned miracles are commonly done by magical arts and enchantments, by sleight of hand, or illusion of sight; and such are performed ofttimes in the dark, or by consent and collusion of parties. Of this kind were those of the magicians, who contended with Moses, till they were forced to own the finger of God in Moses's miracles, and only juggling and sleight of hand in their own. Such were the wonders done by Simon Magus, Apollonius, and others, in opposition to the apostles; whereas Christ's miracles were open and plain in the view of all people, and the undeniable effects of a Divine power, and all done to seal the truth of the most divine and heavenly revelation that was ever made known to the world. Persons known to be dead, by a word's speaking were brought to life again, and seen to be so by multitudes of people; diseases incurable by the rules of physic, were immediately healed by a word, by a touch, by a thought, and that as well absent as present. So was the miracle performed on the nobleman's son, of which we read in the gospel for this day; which is here said to be the second miracle he wrought after his return into Cana of Galilee, where he wrought the first.

This is the substance of this day's gospel, which may teach us these lessons.

1st, This nobleman's coming to Christ, may teach the greatest persons not to disdain to come to him; for he is higher than the highest, and the necessities of all men may drive them to him.

Indeed, virtue and religion add a lustre to greatness, adorn nobility, and render it the more noble and illustrious: *nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus;* virtue is only true valuable nobility: which should make men study not so much to be great as good. and to prefer the character of a true Christian before the highest of all earthly titles.

Lastly, From this discourse we may learn the goodness of God in confirming our faith by such evident effects of a Divine power; and likewise to answer the end and design of them, by a firm believing in Christ, and a steadfast adhering to the doctrine delivered by him; by both laying the whole stress of our hopes of mercy and salvation upon him, who is able to cure all the maladies of body and soul, and will ere long place us above the reach or danger of either: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE TWO AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. i. 3—11.—*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always, in every prayer of mine for you all; making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now*, &c.

THE collect for this day prays to God, to keep his household the Church in continual godliness; that through his protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve him in good works. Suitable whereunto,—

The epistle for the day contains St. Paul's prayer for these things in the behalf of the Philippians, that God would prosper the Church among them, and that they might persevere in godliness and good works. It begins,—

First, With thanksgiving unto God, for the good work begun in them.

Secondly, It goes on with petitions for the farther increase and perfection of it.

Thirdly, It concludes with some helps and means of continuing of it to the day of Christ. Of which particularly; beginning,—

First, As the epistle doth, with thanksgiving unto God, for the good work that was begun in them: 'I thank my God (saith he) upon every remembrance of you.' St. Paul, at the time of writing this epistle, was a prisoner at Rome for the name of Christ, where these Philippians, whom he had lately converted to Christianity, sent him some relief by the hands of Epaphroditus their bishop. In return whereof, he sent them by the same hands this epistle, full of kindness and acknowledgments; wherein he declares his hearty and frequent remembrance of them, who had so kindly remembered him. Their liberal bounty towards him

had left such deep impressions on his mind, that nothing could wear them off; for he could neither forget the kindness, nor the persons that bestowed it; both which put him upon thanking and praising 'God upon every remembrance' of them. And because he had no other way of requiting of them, but by praying for them, he lets them know, that he was 'always' mindful of them 'in every prayer of his,' that grace and peace, with all other spiritual and temporal blessings, might be multiplied on them all: 'making request with joy for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now;' mingling rejoicing with his petitions, for their being received into the household of Christ's Church, and their liberal contributing to the propagating of the gospel; which he observed in them from their first receiving the faith to the present time, and therefore he never ceased praying and praising God for them, from the day that he first knew them till now. 'Being confident of this very thing, (as he goes on,) that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ.' The good work here said to be begun in them, may be understood either of their first receiving the gospel, whereby they were turned from the darkness of paganism to the light of Christianity, and from the power of Satan to the privileges of the sons of God; or else of this good beginning of their charity, in relieving the necessities of the distressed saints; in both which, the apostle is here persuaded of the Philippians, that they will persevere to the coming of Christ; that is, that he who inclined them to embrace the christian faith, will keep them steadfast in it to the last; and that he who opened their hearts in bounty and liberality to the needy, will extend and enlarge their bowels to the day of Christ, when they shall receive the reward of so doing.

And this opinion, he tells them in the next words, it was but 'meet for him to have of them all;' not only for the great affection he bore to them, as 'having them all in his heart,' but 'forasmuch as both in his bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, they were all partakers of his grace;' meaning, that in the defence and maintenance of the gospel they all joined and participated with him, both in the joys and sufferings that attended so difficult a work. And therefore, he calls God to witness what a sincere and entire affection he harboured in his breast towards them: 'God is my record, (saith he,) how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.'

But, Secondly, what was the matter of his prayer, or the things he interceded for in their behalf? Why, that the following part of the epistle for the day will inform us; which goes on thus:—

1st, 'And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.' And then it follows,—

2dly, 'That ye may approve things that are excellent.'

3dly, 'That ye may be sincere, and without offence till the day of Christ.'

4thly, 'That ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.'

These are the chief heads of the apostle's prayer for these Philippians; which being all matters of great weight and benefit, may be recommended to the earnest desires and endeavours of all Christians.

1. The first and great thing here prayed for, is for the increase of the grace of love, which is the bond of perfectness, and the fulfilling of the law: 'And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment.' And this love relates both to God and man; the one being to be loved for himself, and the other for God's sake.

(1.) As for the love of God, that is the prime duty of religion, that includes all other parts of it: it hath the first and supreme Being for its object, being fixed on God the great Creator and Disposer of all things, who is the most amiable and lovely of all beings, having all goodness in himself, and shewing all goodness to his creatures; and therefore this grace is well worth the praying for. So did the apostle here for the Philippians, that the belief of the gospel might beget in them a hearty love to God, with an inward delight and complacency in him: so should we likewise, that God would shed abroad his love into our hearts, and that too not in low and weak measures, but in the most ardent and intense degrees, that it may daily increase, and 'abound in us more and more.' Which we should the rather do, because the love of the world is too apt to abate, and sometimes to extinguish the love of God. Earthly things have a false bias, and draw strongly; being present to our view, they affect and inveigle our senses, and thereby take off the heart from divine and spiritual objects. Hence we find many to serve mammon more than their Maker, and others to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God: and therefore we have great need to pray both for ourselves and others, that our love to God may abound more and more, that it may not be weakened by any worldly comforts or enjoyments, but may prevail over all the wiles of the world and the devil. To which end, our love must abound 'in knowledge and in all judgment;' *i. e.* in the knowledge of God's infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, with all other his amiable and adorable perfections; and we must likewise weigh in the balance of a sound judgment all earthly things, which in comparison of him are nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. And as this prayer here is, that our love to God may abound and increase in us; so is it,—

(2.) For the increase of our love to the brethren, and that our love to one another may abound more and more. A true love of God will necessarily draw after it the love of our neighbour; for he being God's creature and servant, that hath his image stamped

upon him, and in some measure partaker of the divine nature, he is to be loved not only for his own, but for God's sake; which made St. John affirm, 'that he that saith he loves God, and hates his brother, is a liar; for if he love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' 1 John iv. 20. Sight and conversation is apt to breed and beget love, whereas it is not easy to love one whom we never saw; and if our love extend not to our neighbour, whom we daily behold and converse with, how can it reach to heaven, where our eye cannot pierce? Indeed, the comfort and happiness of human society depend upon the mutual amity and good-will of all its members; for that will incline them to be helpful to each other, and make them willing both to relieve the necessities, and rejoice in the welfare of one another. Such a temper as this both needs and deserves our prayers; for men are naturally envious and malicious, hateful and hating one another; Satan is ever administering occasions of strife, and the world is as ready to embrace them, and to add fuel to the fire. And therefore it is highly requisite, that we should pray for a spirit of meekness and charity, and 'that our love may abound more and more' to one another, and that too 'in knowledge and in all judgment;' that we may wisely perform all the good offices of mercy and kindness, by a discreet choice of fit and proper objects for them, viz., not the idle and the lazy, but the aged poor, and such as by unavoidable accident and necessity are cast upon us. This is the first thing that the apostle here prays for in the behalf of the Philippians, to wit, that their love might abound, and increase more and more, and that it might appear in all the judicious acts of bounty and charity.

2. The next thing is, 'that they might approve things that are excellent.' Where, by things that are excellent, we are to understand things that relate to another life, which are of the highest nature, and the greatest worth; such as the favour of God, the pardon of sin, a title to heaven, an interest in Christ and the promises of the gospel, and the like; things that may be justly accounted truly excellent, and preferable to all others matters.

Some translations, instead of 'approving things that are excellent,' read 'discerning between things that differ;' that is, distinguishing spiritual and heavenly things from all carnal and earthly enjoyments, which are of an inferior and different nature, and vastly below them.

Now, to approve the things that are excellent, implies,—

(1.) The knowing or right understanding of them; for none can approve of a thing of which he hath no knowledge, no more than a blind man can judge of colours, or a deaf man of sounds. To approve, is an act of the will and affections, which must ever follow the dictates and guidance of the understanding, or else they cannot go aright. Ignorance is to the mind what blindness is to

the eye, its blemish and imperfection, that hinders it from discerning of truth, and so misleads into error. 'The natural man (saith the apostle) discerns not the things of God;' and he that discerns them not, to be sure, can never like or approve them. The cock in the fable preferred a barleycorn before a jewel, because he knew not either the meanness of the one, or the worth of the other; and for the same reason the worldling prefers the toys and trifles of this life, before an inestimable treasure in the next, for want of a right understanding of either. So that to approve the best things, evermore supposes the knowledge of them; which, for the excellency of the object, may be well reckoned the most excellent knowledge. St. John styles it 'life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.' John xvii. 3. St. Paul desired to 'know nothing among the Corinthians, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' 2 Cor. ii. And likewise told these Philippians, that he 'counted all other things but as loss and dung, in comparison of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ.' Chap. iii. 8.

(2.) To approve things that are excellent, implies not only the knowledge, but a firm and steadfast belief of them. It is a great malady of the mind (as a learned divine hath observed) to be filled with doubts and diffidence about the most excellent and useful matters; for these are sad symptoms of a shattered and broken understanding. A man may indeed entertain some doubts in matters impertinent to life or happiness, without any danger, because neither his present or future welfare is much concerned in them. But to be wavering and at a loss in things wherein our greatest concernments lie, is a very great infelicity. Thus, to call in question the differences of good and evil, to doubt the truth of Divine revelation, and to be in suspense about the doctrine of the gospel, and other like weighty and important matters, is a sore disease and infirmity of the mind, that fills it with great anxieties, and brings on the greatest uncertainties of life and practice.

And therefore we are told, that 'he that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;' Heb. xi. 6; that is, he must have a firm persuasion both of the being and the bounty of his Maker, together with a steadfast faith in the truth of the gospel, and an unshaken belief of the method of salvation prescribed in it. This is to approve things that are excellent, and is what St. Paul here prays for in the behalf of these Philippians.

Lastly, It is not only to know and believe, but to choose these divine and excellent things, above all other vain and useless matters. There is a vanity that reigns too much in the minds of men, which leads them too far into the search of nice and needless speculations; and this hath occasioned the starting of many curious and foolish questions, which engender strife, and greatly disturb the peace and quiet of the world. This is an itch that

hath seized some of the wiser men, who have thereby infected vulgar minds, turning many from the truth, and turning them unto fables. The apostle sharply rebukes these things in his epistles to Timothy and Titus, as you may read, 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5, and Tit. iii. 9.

To cure this vanity, the apostle here directs, to study and 'approve the things that are excellent;' that is, to divert the mind from vain, useless speculations, and fix it on more solid and useful truths, such as the knowledge of God and ourselves, with the things that pertain to life and godliness: the doing whereof is the second thing here prayed for in the behalf of the Philippians.

3. The third is, for sincerity and an inoffensive conversation; 'That ye may be sincere and without offence to the day of Christ.' Among the many faults and miscarriages in religion, there is none more odious unto God, and more dangerous to men's souls, than that of hypocrisy, which is a mocking and affronting of God under a pretence of serving him: it is like Judas's betraying of Christ with a kiss, or the Jews crying, 'Hail, Master!' when they were about to crucify him. Hypocrisy is no better than a lying unto God and man, and seeks what it can to put a cheat upon both: it is an affectation or seeming to be what a man is not, and so it is the counterfeit of religion, or an outward show and appearance, without the inward truth and reality of it. This was the great sin of the Pharisees, for which our Saviour denounces many woes against them. Matt. xxiii.

Now to be preserved from this sin and misery, the apostle directs to pray for sincerity with an upright and inoffensive conversation; that is, to be the same within as they appear without, that their words may agree with their minds, and their actions with both. This is that Divine grace that preserves the purity of heart and life, and so recommends us both to God and men. This is that 'simplicity and godly sincerity,' in which the apostle wills us to 'have our conversation,' that we may continue blameless and without offence 'to the day of Christ;' that is, till his second coming to judgment, when he will publicly expose and punish the hypocrite, and openly commend and reward his faithful servants.

4. The last thing here prayed for, is, that the Philippians might 'be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.' Where by 'the fruits of righteousness,' we are to understand the fruits of God's Holy Spirit; such as joy, love, peace, long-suffering, meekness, patience, temperance, and the like, reckoned up in Gal. v.

To 'be filled with them,' is to abound and grow up in them from a stock of Divine grace, wrought in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and conferred upon us by the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ: which fruits redound not only to our

own good, but 'to the glory and praise of God.' For 'herein is my Father glorified (saith Christ) that ye bring forth much fruit.' John xv.

Thus we see the several parts of the apostle's prayer in the behalf of the Philippians, the subject of this day's epistle. From all which we may learn,—

1. That it is an office of great charity to pray for one another; for this is the best, and sometimes the only way we have to do them any service. So did St. Paul here to the Philippians, whom he always 'remembered in every prayer, making request with joy.' The like we find doing for the Colossians, chap. i. 9, 'Since the day we heard of your faith, we cease not to pray for you.' And elsewhere, 'God forbid that I should sin against God, in ceasing to pray for you.' As if it were an act of the greatest impiety against God, as well as injustice and unkindness towards our neighbour, to neglect so weighty a duty in their behalf. These pious examples recommend to us this great office of charity, to be tenderly affected to, and to be always mindful of one another in our prayers.

2. We learn hence the subject-matter of our prayers, or what it is that we are to pray for in the behalf of each other. And that is, for the increase of love to God and man, that it may abound more and more towards both, for the knowledge and approbation of the best things, viz. such as are necessary to our present peace and future happiness; for such a sincere and unblemished life, as may lead to the attainment of both; and finally, for such a stock of grace and good fruits, as may tend to the glory of God and our own salvation.

This is a good direction both for the matter and manner of our prayers for one another; to which if we keep, we shall do well, being assured of finding the return of such prayers in our own bosom; for Christ hath encouraged us with the promise of an answer to such petitions, and that whatsoever we ask the Father in his name, he will give it. Which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLV.

ON THE GOSPEL FOR THE TWO AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW xviii. 21, to the end.—*Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, who would take account of his servants,* &c.

THE subject of the gospel for this day, is touching the great duty of men's forgiving one another their trespasses; a duty

frequently enjoined and inculcated by our blessed Saviour, and particularly in that excellent and divine form of prayer, which he gave to his disciples, in which he taught them to ask forgiveness of their trespasses, as they forgave those that trespass against them: where our forgiving of others, is made both the condition and measure of that forgiveness which we ask for ourselves; and to desire the one without doing the other, is rather to provoke than to prevail with him for a blessing.

Now the nature, necessity, and other circumstances of this duty, are explained to us in the gospel for this day; all which are illustrated by a parable of a certain king's dealing with his servants, as we shall see in the handling of it.

The gospel begins with a question moved by St. Peter, who came to Jesus, and said unto him, 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?' The occasion of this question was from some discourse going before, where our Saviour had said to his disciples, 'If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother:' that is, go and admonish him privately, to avoid all shame and reproach, and if he repent and amend, forgive him. Now, here St. Peter interposed, I know that we are to forbear our offending brother; and if upon the first, second, or third admonition he repent, to forgive him. But what if he who hath thus trespassed, and repented once, relapse into the same or greater fault, and repent again, how often must I thus bear with him and forgive him? Must I do this over and over again, till it comes perhaps to seven times? To this Jesus replied, 'I say not unto thee, till seven times, but until seventy times seven.' Where there is *numerus certus pro incerto;* and the sense of the phrase is, that this is to be done not only often, but always, without any limitation of time: though the number of his offences be many and often repeated, yet as often as he renews his repentance, so often are we to renew our forgiveness; according to that of St. Luke, chap. xvii. 4: 'If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.' Whereby we see, that God would have our pardoning mercy be in some measure like his, *i. e.* unwearied and unlimited; which is to 'be mereiful as our heavenly Father is merciful.' But the better to explain this matter, and to shew how fully, how freely, and how frequently we are to remit the injuries and trespasses committed against us, it is here set forth and illustrated by a parable, representing the benefit of so doing, and the danger of doing otherwise.

The parable begins in the next words: 'Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened to a certain king, who would take account of his servants.' Where by 'the kingdom of heaven' is meant the Church of Christ, together with all the parts and members of it. God's dealing with them now under the gospel is here very

fitly compared to a certain king, who had many servants, whom he called to bring in their account, to see how they had managed their trust, and what debts they had contracted. By this king here is represented God Almighty, the great King and Sovereign of the world, who is elsewhere compared to a certain householder going into a far country, and committing sundry goods and talents to his servants, whom he after called to a reckoning for them. But to go on with the parable,—

When the king 'began to reckon' with his servants, the first that 'was brought in' was found to 'owe him upon account ten thousand talents.' Now a talent at that time was reckoned seven hundred and fifty ounces of silver, which at five shillings an ounce made the whole amount to a thousand eight hundred and seventy-five thousand pounds; a vast sum of money, and far beyond the power of any servant to pay. By this is represented the many great and invaluable mercies and blessings for which we stand indebted to the goodness of God; mercies that we are never able either to reckon or requite.

But what did the king in the parable to this servant, who was run so deep in arrears, as not to be able to get out? Why that the next verse tells us; 'Forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.' Where the master ordered him to be used according to the custom then in use among the Jews; which was, that debtors that were not able to pay, were appointed to be sold, they and their wives and children, to become servants and bondmen to those that bought them, and by that sale the debt was to be satisfied. Of this custom we read in 2 Kings iv. 1, where a creditor came upon such an occasion to take 'two sons' of a distressed widow 'to be made bondmen.' This usage (as some authors tell us) was only exercised on such debtors, as by idleness, knavery, or prodigality had rendered themselves unable to pay; whereas industrious persons, who were disabled by unavoidable accidents and necessity, found more favour: though this custom is continued to this day in some barbarous countries, in its utmost rigour and severity.

This passage of the parable is designed to let us know what God in justice may exact from all wicked, ungrateful, and unprofitable servants: he may require of them the utmost farthing, or yield them up to be slaves and vassals to the worst of enemies; or, which is worse, cast them into the prison of hell, and doom them to outer and eternal darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But how did this servant behave himself under this sad and severe sentence? Why it follows, 'the servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' The indebted servant, instead of denying or outfacing the debt, in all humility fell upon his knees,

praying him to shew mercy, and to mitigate his sentence, and not to use extremity towards him; assuring him that he wanted not will, but ability to pay; and if he would grant him time and patience, he would do his utmost to discharge the debt, and give him full satisfaction.

This passage gives us to understand, how we are to demean ourselves towards God Almighty, to whom we stand so deeply indebted; to wit, not to disown or lessen the mercies we have received, but humbly to acknowledge our great obligations to the Divine goodness, to be deeply sensible and sorry for any abuse of them, to make fresh promises and take up new resolutions of making better returns for them; imploring his grace to enable and incline us to make him all possible satisfaction.

But how did the master in the parable deal with the servant upon this his humble petition? Why, very mercifully, as the following words declare: 'Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt;' meaning, that he was so tenderly affected towards him, that he not only recalled the former sentence, but frankly remitted the whole debt upon his bare request; a great and unexpected favour.

By this is represented the infinite kindness and readiness of God Almighty to shew mercy, that he is a 'God gracious and merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin;' not exacting from us more than we are able to pay, but willing, upon our submission, to quit scores, to cancel our debts, and to remember our sins no more.

But what was the carriage of this servant, who had so great a debt remitted him, towards his fellow-servants? Did his master's compassion towards him move his bowels upon the like occasion towards them? And was he as willing to forgive others, as he was to be forgiven himself? No, quite otherwise; for the next words tell us, that 'the same servant went out and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.' He who just before had ten thousand talents frankly forgiven him, set upon his fellow-servant with the utmost rigour for an hundred pence; a small inconsiderable sum in respect of the former, yea, not so much as a penny to a pound. He demanded it likewise with that insolence and indignity, as could no ways become the station of a servant, and acted rather the part of a bailiff than a creditor; for 'he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat,' gave him many threatening words, and perhaps blows, roughly requiring him to make present payment of the debt. Strange carriage! for one who was just before forgiven so vast a sum, presently to apprehend another in so rigid a manner, for a debt many hundred times less. One would think so late a favour from his master should not be so suddenly and

so easily forgotten, but that the greatness and frankness of it should have left such deep impressions upon him, as to have set him upon studying to make some return, if not to the master, to some of his servants and dependents; but instead of that, he neither regarded the kindness of his master, nor the necessity of his fellow-servant, but acted with the rudeness and severity of one who clearly overlooked both.

But perhaps this indebted servant might be surly and reproachful in his language or behaviour, either denying the debt, or vainly delaying the payment: no, far otherwise, for this poor servant used the same humble postures of submission to him, as he did before to his master. For this 'fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' He shewed the very same respect, and put up the same petition to him, as he who had so much forgiven him did before to his master. And yet all this would prevail nothing with him; for the next words tell us, 'He would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.' The master's kindness, in the total remitting of his great debt, could not melt him into the least forbearance of his brother for a vastly less; but he used the greatest extremity towards him, casting him into prison, never to be released thence without paying the whole debt.

This passage of the parable shews us the great ingratitude and unworthy dealing of some men towards the greatest benefactors. The great kindness shewed to this servant, was intended to oblige him to shew the like to others, especially his fellow-servants; and the doing otherwise, was an act of great ingratitude: it is to be utterly insensible of the highest obligations, and instead of requiting, to return injuries and indignities for the greatest favours; which they that do, deserve to be branded with the blackest marks of reproach and infamy.

But how did the other servants resent this base and unworthy treatment of one of their fellow-servants? Why, that the following words declare: 'So when the fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.' They were much troubled at the hard usage and sufferings of one of their fellow-servants, and likewise at the insolent and barbarous behaviour of him that dealt thus unmercifully with him; and knowing how widely different this usage was from what he himself had found from his master, they came in a body together, to inform their lord of all that had passed. Which may teach us to resent all such baseness and ingratitude, and to bring all such cruel and barbarous users of their brethren to condign punishment.

But what followed upon their acquainting their lord with this matter? Why, it is said that 'his lord, after he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredst me; shouldst not thou also have had

compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?' Where he first rebuked him with sharp and severe language, calling him, 'Thou wicked servant;' and upbraiding him with his former kindness, shewed to so vile and unworthy a wretch; together with his ungrateful and unrelenting usage of his fellow-servant, in not shewing the least compassion to him, when he himself had just then found so much. These words of the parable are thus paraphrased by a learned divine: 'O thou unconscionable man, thou canst not but remember how I lately forgave thee all that vast sum owing to me, with which this of thy fellow-servant bears no proportion; and that upon thy bare request, without any other motive but my own compassion, to invite me to so great an act of mercy: was it not, then, reasonable for thee, who hadst received such a favour from thy master, to have shewed some pity at least in remitting so small a sum, when I had remitted to thee six hundred thousand times as much?' This was smart and good reasoning, indeed, and enough to convince or shame the most hard-hearted wretch.

But was this all that the lord did to so wicked and unworthy a servant? No, he knew well enough that words to such vile persons prove no better than wind, and leave no impression behind them; and therefore it is added, that 'his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him;' meaning, that he was justly enraged against him, and served him as he had done his fellow-servant, delivering him to the tormentors, that is, either the bailiffs or officers appointed to seize such persons, who, for the miseries, charges, and troubles they commonly put upon them, are styled tormentors; or else the keepers of prisons, who are wont to detain them there till the debt is discharged. In short,—

The lord recalled his former pardon, and exacted from him the whole debt, committing him to gaol, till he had paid the utmost farthing.

This is the parable appointed to be read for the gospel of this day; the application whereof is in the close of it, in these words: 'So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.' Where, by this resemblance, we see what measure to expect from God in this matter, who will deal with us as we do with others: if we forgive not men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive ours; and they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy.

This is the drift and scope of this parable, from whence we may learn the following lessons:—

1. That it is an act of charity to remit a debt, where it cannot be paid. This we learn from the example of God himself, who requires from none more than they can do; and therefore we may not exact from any beyond their ability. We are bid to 'be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful;' and to follow

the example of his beneficence and charity, who 'forgiveth iniquity, transgression, and sin.' This God daily does for us, and this he expects we should in some measure do for one another. Not that any should take encouragement from hence wilfully to run into debt with a design to defraud, or to pretend poverty to enrich themselves with the spoils of others; in such cases the severity of the law may and ought to take place. But in cases of real and extreme necessity, and where unavoidable accidents have occasioned the inability, there mercy and pity ought to be shewed.

2. From the servant's taking his fellow-servant by the throat for a small sum, when he himself was just before forgiven a much greater, we learn the cruelty of the rigorous requiring of any, more than he is able to perform, especially when we ourselves have found favour in that kind. The master here had remitted to his servant many talents and pounds, and yet the same servant would not remit a few pence or farthings to his fellow-servant; for which the master was so highly offended at his cruelty and ingratitude, that he revoked his former pardon, and called him to another reckoning, where the remitted sum was again charged upon him and exacted from him, and he cast into prison till he should pay the utmost farthing. The same dealing may they reasonably expect, and will surely find at God's hand, who are thus cruel and unmerciful to their fellow-creatures. We daily run on the score with our Maker, and contract debts to him, which we can never pay; and if we expect that God should forgive us our debts, we must forgive them that are indebted unto us, without which we cannot hope for any favour: for this is the condition upon which God hath promised, and upon which we are to ask forgiveness of 'our trespasses,' viz., 'as we forgive them that trespass against us;' without which, neither reason nor religion can give us any encouragement to hope for it; for God expects that we should be so disposed towards our brethren, as we would have him be towards us, which is no more than what the golden rule of reason and equity requires of us; to wit, to do to others as we would be done by ourselves. So that if we forgive others, we may reasonably hope to be forgiven ourselves; but if we have no bowels of mercy and compassion towards our brethren, we may not wonder if God's be closed up, and yearn not towards us. Wherefore, in the

Last place, let us learn to forgive others, as well as ask forgiveness at God's hand; for these are so closely tacked and linked together, that we may not hope for God's pardon, without granting ours. Let us lay aside all malice and prejudice against our brethren, and quit all old scores against those that have not paid that duty and respect that is owing to us; yea, let us forgive enemies that have used us ill and done us harm, and then we may depend upon God's goodness in forgiving our offences. If we pass not by the lesser debts and wrongs of our brethren, God

will exact his greater from us; and therefore let us take heed, that we bring not God strictly to account with us, for our being too rigorous towards others; but let us learn to shew mercy in smaller matters, and then we shall find mercy in greater; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE THREE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. iii. 17, to the end.—*Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them who walk so, as ye have us for ensample; for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,* &c.

THE collect for this day beseeches God to hear the devout prayers of his Church, and to grant that those things which we ask faithfully, may be obtained effectually. To which end,—

The epistle for the day teaches us how our persons must be qualified, that our prayers may be accepted; to wit, by following our forerunners in the faith, and a pious imitation of their examples. It begins with the loving compellation of 'brethren,' which the apostle here gives to the Philippians, on purpose to insinuate and instil his instructions into them; for that is better done by the endearing expressions of love and kindness, than the rougher methods of power and passion, as gentler rains pierce deeper than greater storms: and therefore St. Paul told Philemon, Philem. 8, 9, that though he might command him as a father, yet he chose rather to entreat him as a brother. In like manner he treats the Philippians here, not as strangers or enemies, but entreats them as friends and brethren, the better to prevail and work upon them. The advice he here ushers in with these endearments is, that they would follow his steps, and those of the other apostles, and observe and imitate those that walk so, as they have them for ensamples; and that because there are many who walk very disorderly, and set such bad examples before them, as lead only to misery and destruction, by minding nothing but sensualities and earthly things; whereas the other will lead them to heaven, where their conversation is: from whence also we look for a Saviour, and thereby prepare for the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will then change our vile mortal body into the fashion of his glorious body, by that infinite power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.

This is the sense and substance of this day's epistle, which must be therefore particularly considered. Accordingly I begin,—

First, With the great and principal thing which the apostle here exhorts to, and that is, 'to be followers together of him,'

and the other apostles; 'and to mark them who walk so, as they have them for ensamples.' Examples you know have a very great influence upon men's manners, either for the mending or marring of them; they often draw much stronger than precepts, and most men, like sheep, are wont to go, not so much where they should, as where they see others go before them; which shews it to be a matter of great consequence what company we keep, and what patterns we have before us. It was wise advice of a learned heathen, that every one should propound to himself the best patterns, not only of virtue in general, but of each virtue in particular; instancing in the piety of Socrates, the gravity of Cato, the justice of Aristides, the fidelity of Regulus, and the like; willing them to set these and other like good examples before them, as their copy to write after, and to transcribe their virtues as a rule of their lives and actions. This excellent advice hath been improved by others since, who have directed to the reading the lives of the most eminent and worthy persons recorded in sacred and civil history, and making observation of the best and worthiest actions related of them; that, by often thinking and remembering of them, they may be a spur to our emulation, and prick us forward to the practice and imitation of them.

But the epistle for this day propounds to us the best patterns of this kind that can be set, to wit, the lives and actions of the holy apostles; whose diligence in propagating the gospel, constancy to the faith, and firm adherence to the principles and practices of their profession, notwithstanding all the difficulties and discouragements they met with in it, are highly worthy to be followed by all Christians. But the foregoing verses, mentioning the harmony of the apostles in doctrine and discipline, and their exhorting all Christians, as far as they had attained, to walk by the same rules, without discord or dissension, implies the being followers of them in these things; and not only so, but to 'mark them that walk so, as ye have them for ensamples;' following such as follow them, and learning by their pattern to do likewise.

But why doth the apostle so earnestly press their example upon all their followers? Why, that the next words will tell us, 'For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping;' meaning, that there were many that walked so disorderly, and so contrary to the christian profession, that he could not think of them without trouble, nor speak of them without tears. And who were they? Why, the apostle describes them in the following words:—

1st, By their being 'enemies of the cross of Christ.' Of this sort were the Jews and the Greeks in those days; the one denying, and the other deriding a crucified Saviour. So St. Paul tells us, that he 'preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' And such are the deists and infidels of our age, who call the preaching of Christ by the name of priestcraft, and ridicule religion and all the

mysteries of the gospel. These are truly 'enemies of the cross of Christ;' and as the apostle could not speak of those of old without weeping, so are these hardly to be mentioned without tears, especially considering what he adds in the next words, 'that their end is destruction;' for there being no other name given under heaven by which we can be saved, but the name of Christ, who is the only peace-maker between God and man, how can any hope for mercy or pardon without him? Hence the apostle asks the question, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? for this is to 'trample under foot the Son of God,' who is alone able to help us; and to count the blood of the cross an unholy thing, which is only able to sanctify us. He that rejects the remedy must perish without relief; and he that refuseth redemption must remain a slave for ever. They that are enemies to the cross of Christ, can be no true friends to themselves; yea, they are greater enemies to their own souls than they can be to our Saviour, for they dash against the rock of their salvation, and must suffer an everlasting shipwreck. These are the persons that drew tears from the apostle, of 'whom he had often told the Philippians,' and here 'tells them even weeping.' Again,—

2dly, He describes them by their making their belly their God, in the next words, 'Whose God is their belly;' that is, their minds are chiefly set upon what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and give themselves up to the sway of an unruly appetite. Of this sort are all gluttons and epicures, who study all manner of delicacies to pamper the body, and make provision for the lusts of the flesh. These have their heads and their hearts busied about their bellies, which they labour to serve and please more than God; but they that fare thus well here, will fare the worse for it hereafter, when these things come to be reckoned for. The rich glutton in the gospel that fared deliciously every day, wanted at last a cup of cold water to cool his tongue; and they who now, with so much care and cost, pamper their body, shall ere long pine with everlasting hunger; and therefore our Saviour gave a strict charge to his followers, 'to take heed that their hearts be not overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, lest that day come upon them unawares.' Luke xxi. 34. Again,—

3dly, The apostle describes these disorderly walkers by their glorying in their shame, in the same verse, 'Whose glory is in their shame;' that is, they glory in the follies and deformities of human nature, and boast of those base and beastly lusts of which they ought to be ashamed. Of this sort are all sensual and voluptuous persons, who are 'lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;' who, having cast off all blushing, pride themselves in the rehearsing of their vile debauches: of these the apostle speaks, Eph. iv. 19, who being 'past shame, or feeling of any remorse, gave themselves up to lasciviousness, committing all uncleanness with greediness.' And too many such there are in

our days, who have steeled their foreheads, and seared their consciences beyond all sense of evil, boasting of their wickedness, and glorying in that which should overwhelm them with shame and sorrow; but all such boasting is vain, and will end at last in the greatest shame and confusion of face for ever. And because these could not weep for themselves, the apostle here weeps for them, considering the fatal end of all such folly and boasting.

Lastly, These disorderly walkers here are described by their minding earthly things, in the same verse, 'Who mind earthly things;' that is, who cherish an inordinate love of this world, with a careless neglect of the other; their hearts being so bent upon their worldly interest, as to stick at no ways, how base or unjust soever, to compass their ends. Of this kind are all worldlings and covetous persons, who fill their heads with carking cares and fears about themselves, and harbour in their hearts unjust desires and hankerings after the goods of others; such as these serve mammon more than God, and worship the creature more than the Creator; for which reason covetousness is often styled idolatry, and covetous persons are branded for idolaters.

These are the bad examples which the apostle here laments with tears, and wills all Christians not to follow, but avoid; 'to have no fellowship with such unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them:' not to conform to such vile practices of the world, nor to follow a multitude, how great and numerous soever, to do evil; all which look no higher than these earthly things, and lead only to misery and ruin.

But instead of them, he exhorts them to be followers of him and the other apostles, who set better examples, and guide to higher and nobler things; for, as he goes on to tell them,—

'Our conversation is in heaven;' that is, whereas others are so addicted to the earth, as to mind only the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, we look higher than this world, and mind chiefly the things above; and this will be a better pattern for you to imitate and to lead you to heaven, than they who are glued to the earth, and lie grovelling upon it; 'for our conversation is in heaven.' The word in the original is πολίτευμα, which alludes to a city or corporation which hath many privileges and duties belonging to those that are free of it, though they live at some distance from it; and so the apostle's meaning is, that though they were born in this world, and lived in it, yet they belonged to another, and were free denizens of heaven, which is often styled a city; and accordingly we converse and behave ourselves here as those that are free of another city above, and belong to it. Hence we find them declaring, that 'they looked not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.' 2 Cor. iv. 18. And elsewhere, 'We walk by faith,' which 'is the evidence of things not seen,' 'and not by sight,' which reaches only to present and perishing objects. This

is that wherein the apostle would have us to be followers of them, and likewise to mark them that do so, according to their example; the better to take off our hearts from an inordinate love and pursuit of earthly things, and to raise our minds and affections to the things of heaven: for both which, they have left us both their precept and their pattern.

But the farther to recommend and enforce their example upon us, of having, like them, our conversation in heaven, here are added two great encouragements thereunto:—

1. Because from 'thence we also look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.' And,—

2. Because when he comes, he will 'change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to his working, whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.' Of each of which something briefly: and,—

1. The apostle wills us to have our conversation in heaven, because 'we also,' as well as they, 'from thence look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' That our Saviour Christ will come again from heaven to judge the world at the last day, we are often told in holy Scripture; 'This same Jesus, (saith the angel to the disciples,) which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Acts i. 11. He shall come from heaven attended 'with his mighty angels,' saith St. Paul, 2 Thess. i. 7. And elsewhere, 'He shall come with a shout,' and 'in the clouds of heaven.' Now the expectation hereof set the apostles a looking, longing, and preparing for his coming, which they did by heavenly-mindedness, and all other acts of a pious life. So St. Paul tells us, Tit. ii. 12, 13, 'The grace of God which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ.' And herein we are called upon to imitate them, by having our conversation in heaven, from whence the Saviour comes, and whither we hope he will bring us. And the rather,—

2. Because when he comes, he will 'change our vile body, that it may be fashioned according to his glorious body,' &c. meaning, that our crazy bodies shall be then freed from all the deformities and infirmities that now belong to them, and be new framed and moulded into the fashion, qualities, and perfections of Christ's body: that is,—

(1.) Our vile, base, and abject bodies shall be changed into glorious bodies; so saith St. Paul, 'It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.'

(2.) Our natural, earthly, and fleshly bodies shall be changed into spiritual and heavenly bodies; so it is said, 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' Again,—

(3.) Our weak, frail, and passive bodies shall be changed into

active, vigorous, and powerful bodies; so it is added, 'It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.' And,—

Lastly, (4.) Our mortal, corruptible bodies shall be changed into immortal and incorruptible bodies; so it is farther said, 'It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; and this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.' In a word, both our bodies and souls shall be refined and raised to all those glorious qualities and perfections to which they are capable of being advanced; and 'when that which is perfect is come, then all that is imperfect shall be done away:' and all this shall be done for us by that infinite and Almighty power 'that is able to subdue all things to himself.'

Now if we look for these great things, as we undoubtedly may, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? How frequently and firmly should our minds and meditations be fixed on heaven, from whence we expect the coming of this Saviour, and with whom we hope to return and reign in glory? This the apostles did, and this they would have us to do, as also to observe and imitate those that walk by their example.

Thus having shewed the drift and scope of this epistle, it remains, in the last place, that I press upon you the great lesson that is taught in it; and that is, to be followers of the holy apostles, and to set their lives and actions before you, as a pattern for yours. To this end, read often the Scriptures of the New Testament, where their memorable works and actions are recorded, and bear them in mind, that you may have them always ready as occasion shall require; not that you are to be followers of them in doing the miracles and other wonderful works that they did, for that was a power or privilege peculiar to them, granted for a while only for the confirmation and propagation of the gospel; which being now well confirmed and propagated, there can be no farther need or use of them, and therefore are not to be prayed for or pretended to by us. Nor yet are we to be followers of the apostles in their failings and infirmities, some whereof were very great: as, St. Peter's denying his Master, St. Paul's persecuting the Church, and the like, which are recorded in Scripture, not that we should follow, but forsake them: but that which we are called upon to imitate in them, is their virtues, to follow their good works, to have them before us as a rule to govern our actions, or as a copy to transcribe in our lives and conversations, and to walk even as they walked. And indeed what better precedents can we follow, than they who have not only chalked out our way for us by their precepts, but likewise trod every step of it before us by their examples? To both which let us all learn to conform our lives, and labour not to swerve from either in the whole course of our conversation. To which end,—

2. Let us abandon the ways and works of all loose, profane, and profligate persons; and such disorderly walkers, as the apostle

could not speak of without weeping, let us not think of without abhorring and avoiding, for their end is destruction, to which they lead themselves and all their followers: we have seen their description, being such, 'whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, and who mind only earthly things.' In opposition whereunto, let us,—

3. Especially imitate the apostles in their holy and heavenly conversation: for though they lived upon the earth, yet they declared that they belonged to another country, they were but pilgrims and strangers here, their citizenship and conversation was in heaven; they were dead and crucified to this world, their hearts were there, where their treasure was, even in heaven, from whence they expected their Saviour to come and take them to himself. And since we also look for the same, let us learn to do and to demean ourselves likewise, especially considering the great and glorious change that will then befall both our body and soul, from the many miseries and infirmities of this earth, to all the glories and felicities of heaven. To which God of his mercy bring us all.

DISCOURSE CCXLVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE THREE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATT. xxii. 15—23.—*Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk: and they sent unto him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying,* &c.

THESE words begin the gospel for this day, in which we may observe the spiteful and malicious designs of the Pharisees and others against our Saviour. The occasion of it was from a parable related by him in the foregoing words, which so stung and nettled the Pharisees and others that were too plainly concerned in it, that they went and consulted together how they might take some advantage against him, and draw him into their snare; for so the first words tell us, 'They took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.' The parties sent to him upon this errand to set upon him, were the disciples of the Pharisees, with some of the Herodians, who began with him in this glozing and insinuating language, saying, 'Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man;' meaning, that he was a free speaker of his mind, and would not disguise his thoughts for the fear or flattery of any man: which words they uttered, not out of any honour to him, but merely to encourage him to such a freedom of talk, that they might the better catch at something to make a matter of accusation against him. To which end they came to him with an earnest desire to know his mind freely and impartially, concerning

the matter of tribute, a point much debated among them at that time; 'Tell us therefore (say they) what thinkest thou, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?' Which question proceeded not from any honest desire of satisfaction, or of doing their duty in it, but only from a crafty design of entrapping him; hoping for such an answer as might expose him either to the rage of the Jews, or the fury of the Romans: for the persons that came to him with this ensnaring question, were the Pharisees on the one hand, who were the chief rulers among the Jews, and were against paying of tribute, as thinking it a token of slavery to an usurped power; and the Herodians on the other, who favoured the domination of the Romans to the oppression of the people. So that the snare they had laid for him was this, if he had said, that it was lawful to pay tribute, he had disgusted the Jews, and enraged the people against him, as one that approved the yoke of the Roman tyranny; if he had said, it was not lawful to pay tribute, they would have accused him as a raiser of sedition, and delivered him into the hands of the Roman governor to be used accordingly: by which they set upon him, as it were, with a two-edged sword, that cut both ways, and wounded on every side.

But what answer did our Saviour give them? and how did he evade the danger of their intended treachery? Why, he gave them not presently any direct answer, but first upbraided their malice and hypocrisy; so the next words tell us, 'But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?' Why harbour ye such evil thoughts in your breasts, and hide your malice under a mask of flattery and friendship? However, he that knew their hearts, was able to discover and defeat their designs. To which end,—

He called for a piece of the coin, in which they were wont to pay the tax, saying, 'Shew me the tribute money.' Upon which, 'they brought unto him a penny;' which was the fourth part of the shekel of the sanctuary, and half of an ordinary shekel, the tribute which God himself required to be paid of every Jew yearly, for the use of the temple, as we read, Exod. xxx. 13, which tribute the Romans after sacrilegiously transferred to the Capitol. However that be, Christ looking upon the penny, and observing the image stamped upon it, asked them, 'Whose is this image and superscription? they say unto him, Cæsar's; then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's;' intimating to them, that their coin would answer their question; for if Cæsar's image be upon your current coin, it is an acknowledgment of his supremacy; and your paying and receiving of it in commerce is a token of subjection to him as your prince.

And since tribute is ever due to the Supreme Power, you ought to own it to be his: 'render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. When they heard these words,' it is

said that 'they marvelled' at the wisdom of his answer, and left him, and went their way, admiring of him, and despairing of gaining any advantage against him. This is the sum of the gospel for this day; in which we learn,—

First, The treachery of the Pharisees and others in thus laying designs of entrapping and entangling our Saviour, together with his great prudence in confounding their devices, and eluding all their snares: of these enough hath been spoken already in the gospel for the 17th Sunday after Trinity.

But the principal lesson intended and taught us in this gospel, is from our Saviour's answer to those insidious inquirers; which requires us to 'render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's:' which being matters of daily use and importance to us, must be a little insisted on, and inculcated upon us, as containing in them our duty both to God and the King. For the better knowing and doing whereof, the words teach us,—

First, That there are some particular rights and privileges belonging to Cæsar, or sovereign princes, which are called here, 'the things that are Cæsar's.'

Secondly, That there are some particular rights and prerogatives that belong to God only, styled here, 'the things that are God's.'

Thirdly, The duty of all Christians with reference to both, and that is, to 'render' the respective rights and dues to each.

First, As for the rights and privileges that belong to Cæsar, or sovereign princes, they are chiefly these three; honour to their persons, obedience to their laws, and tribute for their necessary occasions.

1st, Honour to their persons is a plain right belonging to sovereign princes, and is due to them by the laws of God and man. St. Peter hath coupled together the fearing of God, and honouring of the king; the one as the cause and motive of the other, and therefore both must go together. He that fears God will honour the king, and he that honours not the king hath cast off the fear of God, whose minister and vicegerent he is; for God hath stamped his own image and superscription upon them, that all people may know to whom they belong: yea, God hath given them his own name, 'I have said ye are gods,' to procure them the reverence and veneration of mankind. He hath styled them his own anointed, that men may honour and demean themselves towards them accordingly, forbidding any to touch his anointed with the hand of violence; for none can stretch out their hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless. But beside this,—

2dly, Obedience to their laws is a plain right of sovereign princes; for God hath stamped them too with his own authority, to make them current, and to oblige all their subjects. Hence

St. Paul makes it necessary to 'be subject not only for wrath,' or fear of punishment, 'but for conscience' sake.' And St. Peter wills us to 'submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors that are sent by him.'

3dly, Tribute is another right belonging to sovereign princes; and this is the main thing referred to here in our own text, of which our Saviour here convinced the Pharisees and Herodians by the image and superscription upon their money, where they saw Cæsar's face, and after that had not the face to deny his right, but owned it to be his. The coining of money is the prerogative of sovereignty, and that requires both homage and tribute: the image upon the coin shews who is our prince, and to whom these things are due; it is his stamp that makes it current, and so to become the regulation of our contracts, and the standard of our civil commerce; which cannot continue without laws and arms, to which taxes and tribute are sometimes necessary: for both the dignity of the prince, and the safety of the people require tribute, neither of which are to be upheld or preserved without it. And therefore our Saviour here and elsewhere makes it a debt to Cæsar, which may and ought to be discharged: and to this his precept he added also his own example; for he wrought a miracle to pay tribute for himself and Peter, when it was demanded of them, 'lest peradventure (saith he) we should offend;' as we read, Matt. xvii. 27, 28. So tender was he in this point of tribute, though some unjustly accused him for forbidding to pay it. Luke xxiii. 2. St. Paul likewise urges the same, saying, 'Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.' Rom. xiii. 7. These are the rights of sovereign princes, or the things of Cæsar, which Christ and his apostles require to be rendered to them, being absolutely necessary to the support of government, and the defence of their country. But as there are some rights of princes, called 'the things that are Cæsar's' which are to be 'rendered' to them, of which kind, we see, are honour, obedience, and tribute; so there are,—

Secondly, Some peculiar incommunicable rights and prerogatives, that belong to God only, called therefore 'the things that are God's.' Of this kind are all religious worship or divine honour, together with a due reverence and regard to all sacred things, that relate to or belong to God, as his ministers, his house, his day, his revenues, and the like: all which are properly his, and must be regarded as such.

1st, I say, all religious worship belongs to God, and must be rendered to him and no other: so our Saviour hath given us an express charge, saying, 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.' Matt. iv. 10. Divine and sovereign honours are due to him by the right of creation; for he that

made and upholds all things by the word of his power, may justly claim a peculiar honour and homage to be paid to him upon that account; the great Landlord and Proprietor of the world well may and ought to have a particular service and acknowledgment due to him, as a high rent for all his blessings; and this consists in adoring his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness to all his creatures, in praying to him for all that we want, and in praising of him for all that we receive. This is a tribute we all owe to the Supreme Being, it is peculiar to him, and to be paid to none else: in a word, it is one of the things of God that must be rendered to him.

2dly, Another is a due reverence and regard to all sacred things that relate and appertain unto God; which is likewise to be carefully rendered to him. There are some persons and things that are set apart from all common and ordinary uses, and consecrated to holy and divine purposes; all which are said to be holy unto the Lord, for the relation they bear to him as his, and must be respected accordingly: of this kind are God's ministers, God's house, the Lord's day, the Lord's portion of our substance, or sacred revenue appointed for the maintenance of the altar, and those that attend his service; all which being 'the things of God,' are to be rendered to him, and to be respected for his sake. As,—

(1.) The ministers of the gospel are said to be God's ministers, set apart by his order, and devoted to his service, and therefore are to be looked upon and treated as such: so St. Paul orders, 'Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.' 1 Cor. iii. 1. To these God himself hath assigned double honour, saying, 'Count them that labour among you in word and doctrine worthy of double honour, and esteem them highly in love for their works,' 1 Tim. v. 17; 1 Thess. v. 13; though our licentious and degenerate age scarce allow them single honour, and instead of esteeming them highly, seek to bring them as low, and pour as much contempt upon them as they can. But these will be repaid in due time; for God reckons himself honoured in honouring his ministers, as a prince does in respecting his ambassadors; and counts himself despised in despising his ministers, as the prince does in the like case: for 'he that heareth you, heareth me, (saith Christ,) and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.' Luke x. 16. And God himself hath declared, 'They that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.' 1 Sam. ii. 30.

(2.) The church or temple is the house of God, and therefore to be reverenced and used accordingly: Christ calls the temple his house, saying, 'My house is a house of prayer;' meaning, that it was set apart and consecrated for holy uses, and not to be desecrated or profaned, by putting them to any other. Our Saviour never shewed greater indignation than in whipping the

buyers and sellers out of the temple, saying, 'My house is the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves.' And elsewhere, make not 'my house a house of merchandise.' John ii. 16. It is God's own command, 'Ye shall reverence my sanctuary:' by so doing we honour God, whose house it is, shewing a regard to the place where his honour dwells; which being called by his name, and devoted to his service, we are to separate it from all common, and use it only for divine offices. So shall we 'render unto God the things that are God's;' in doing otherwise we invade his house, and profane his sanctuary.

(3.) The Lord's day is another of the things of God, that is to be reverenced, and rendered to him; for God hath reserved and set apart that portion of time for himself, and styled it his: 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God;' and hath therefore given a strict charge, to 'remember that day to keep it holy,' by resting on it from all bodily labours, and to apply it wholly to spiritual and religious exercises. And because of the relation and dependence that there is of these holy times and holy places upon one another, God hath joined them together in one command, saying, 'Ye shall sanctify my Sabbath, and reverence my sanctuary; I am the Lord.' Lev. xix. 30. By so doing we 'render unto God the things that are God's,' and without it we falsify with God, by depriving him of both.

(4.) The tenth part of our earthly substance is another thing that is God's, and must therefore, by our Saviour's rule, be rendered to him; for God, who gives all, hath reserved that part for himself, as a high rent and acknowledgment for all the rest, which he hath made payable to his ministers, who attend his service, and serve at his altar; and to detain it from them, either in whole or in part, is the heinous sin of sacrilege. Hence we find God himself complaining of some men's 'robbing of him in tithes and offerings;' and the denying or depriving him of his part, brings a curse instead of a blessing upon all the remaining parts of their possessions: and therefore we are bid to 'honour God with our substance,' which is by a full and fair payment of what is his, that we may find the benefit and comfort of all the rest. And this right of God Almighty being confirmed by human as well as by divine laws, the withholding of it must be a transgression of both; and they that do so, neither give 'to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' nor 'to God the things that are God's.'

Thus I have briefly shewed both 'the things that are Cæsar's,' or the rights of sovereign princes, viz. honour, obedience, and tribute; as also, 'the things that are God's,' or the rights of the great Sovereign and Ruler of the world, viz. religious worship, which is due to him only; and some divine honours and respects that are to be paid to sacred persons and things, for the relation they bear to him. It remains only to put you in mind of a careful and conscientious discharge of these duties, by rendering to each what of right belongs to them. And,—

1st, Let me mind you of rendering unto Cæsar, or sovereign kings or queens, the things that are theirs; that is, to honour their persons as God's vicegerents, with all the expressions of inward and outward honour, and to take care not to dishonour them in thought, word, or deed.

2dly, Let us render unto them all due submission and obedience to their laws, owning and yielding to their authority for God's sake, and not listening to any suggestions or temptations to the contrary.

3dly, Let us render tribute unto them as occasions shall require, which is here plainly commanded by our Saviour, and is necessary for the safety both of prince and people; the denying whereof to a lawful and pious prince of these kingdoms, hath brought many miseries and heavy burdens upon them ever since. But, above all,—

Lastly, Let us be careful of 'rendering unto God the things that are God's;' that is, by giving to him divine worship, and to none beside him; and likewise by paying all due respect and reverence to those persons, times, and places, that are consecrated to him; honouring his ministers, hallowing his Sabbath, and reverencing his sanctuary. And, among the rest, let us not forget or neglect to render him that sacred part of our substance, which he hath reserved and appropriated to his service; remembering the sad fate of Ananias and Sapphira, who, for withholding and alienating part of the price of their consecrated substance, were both smitten to death by a sudden stroke of divine vengeance, as we may read, Acts v. 1, 2.

In a word, by 'rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' we may live quietly and easily here; and by 'rendering unto God the things that are God's,' we shall live happily for ever hereafter; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

COLOSS. i. 3—13. — *We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that ye have to all the saints*, &c.

THE collect for this day beseeches God to absolve his people from their offences, that through his bountiful goodness they may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by their frailty they have committed; which things cannot better be obtained than by frequent and fervent prayer. And therefore the apostle, in this epistle, puts up his hearty prayers in the behalf of the Colossians, that all sin might decay and die in them,

and that all the graces of the Spirit might grow and flourish among them.

St. Paul had never personally preached the gospel to these Colossians, no, nor so much as been among them; for he tells us, chap. ii. ver. 1, that they were some of them that 'had not seen his face in the flesh.' But Epaphras, his fellow-servant and fellow-prisoner at Rome, had planted a church among them, and converted many to the faith; and by him it was that he sent this epistle to them, to encourage and confirm them in the faith, to which the other had converted them.

So that the epistle for the day contains St. Paul's prayer in the behalf of these Colossians; which being much the same with that which he put up in the behalf of the Philippians, mentioned in the epistle for the twenty-second Sunday after Trinity, I shall not need to repeat what is there treated of, but only consider what is here added to it. It consists partly of thanksgivings for mercies, which they had already received; and partly of supplications for farther blessings to be bestowed upon them; both which being intermingled together, I shall consider them as they are here related.

The epistle begins with thanksgiving, in these words: 'We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where, by 'giving of thanks,' we are to understand not only an inward sense and remembrance of mercies received, but likewise an outward and open acknowledgment of them, accompanied with hearty desires and endeavours of making all possible returns and requital for them. The object, to whom this thanksgiving was made was 'God,' the author of all mercies, both spiritual and temporal, and the almighty donor of all our blessings; for 'every good gift, and every perfect gift, (saith St. James,) is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,' James i. 17, who is here farther styled 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;' by whose merits and mediation all divine blessings are derived to us. To this his giving of thanks, the apostle adds 'his praying always for them, since he heard of their faith in Christ Jesus:' this he heard from Epaphras, a disciple of his, who was the main instrument of preaching and planting the gospel among them, as we shall find after. So that the

1st thing that the apostle here praises God for, and prays for the continuance of, in the behalf of these Colossians, was their embracing of Christianity, or receiving the christian faith; which was an inestimable blessing to them, who were before in a state of heathenism and infidelity: and so being out of the Church, they were 'without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world.' Whereas, by receiving the gospel, they were received into the favour of God, and by the merits of Christ had well-grounded hopes of salvation.

2dly, Another thing, for which he thanks God in them, was 'the love that they had to all the saints;' which appeared by

their contributing to their necessities, and by aiding and comforting them in all their distresses: they proved their faith to be sound and sincere, by its working by love, and abounding in all the acts of mercy and charity.

3dly, He thanks God 'for the hope that was laid up for them in heaven,' ver. 5; that is, for the lively hope of an inheritance immortal, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them; of 'which they heard by the word of the truth of the gospel;' meaning, that they had an assurance hereof by the doctrine of the gospel, which they had heard and received; 'for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' which word of truth 'is come not to them only, but to all the world,' where the gospel is preached; for the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men.

Lastly, He thanks God for the 'good fruits it brought forth in the world,' since the publication of it, 'as it did also in these Colossians, since the day they heard of it, and knew the word of God in truth;' which good fruits served to adorn the gospel that was preached to them, and will redound to their account in the day of Christ.

These are the chief things for which the apostle here gives God thanks in the behalf of the Colossians, which, tending so much to their present and future welfare, were highly thankworthy. This, his praising of God for them, they 'learned of Epaphras, a dear fellow-servant of St. Paul's, and a faithful minister of theirs, who also declared unto the apostle their love in the spirit,' and the entire affection they bore unto him; 'for which cause we also (saith he) since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you.' And this will lead me from the subject-matter of his praises and thanksgivings for them,—

Secondly, To the matter of his prayers and supplications in their behalf: and the first thing he prayed for, or desired for them, was 'that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,' ver. 9. Now, though knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are ofttimes taken promiscuously, to signify one and the same thing; yet here and elsewhere in holy Scripture they have different senses, and may be thus distinguished: knowledge signifies the bare notion or speculation of any matter or thing; wisdom is a practical knowledge, and implies the doing of what we know; understanding is an experimental knowledge, or feeling the truth of what we know. All these the apostle here desires for these Colossians, with reference to the will of God, and all divine truths.

As, (1.) He 'desires that they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will;' that is, that they may have a right notion of the things that God requires, without being misled by ignorance, or mistaken by error. Of ourselves we are blind, and know nothing as we ought: 'The natural man (saith the apostle) discerns not the things of God, neither can he, because they are

spiritually discerned.' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Hence we find David often praying that God would teach him his statutes, and help him to know his testimonies; to open his eyes, that he might behold the wondrous things of his law. And here St. Paul prays for the Colossians, that 'they may be filled with knowledge,' so as to understand things aright, and to 'know the truth as it is in Jesus.'

Next, the apostle prays that their knowledge may be accompanied with wisdom, that is, with the practice of what they know, which is a practical 'knowledge in all wisdom;' an empty notion of divine truths that swims only in the brain without sinking into the heart, and flowing into good works, can be of no use or benefit to any; it is acting according to our knowledge that gives it all its worth and efficacy. And therefore St. James asks the question, 'Who is a wise man, and endowed with knowledge among you?' And then, by way of answer, bids them to 'shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.' James iii. 13. All true christian knowledge must be attended with practice, in which consists true wisdom; and without that, all pretences to it do but betray the greater folly.

Furthermore, the apostle prays in their behalf for 'spiritual understanding;' that is, for such an experimental knowledge of the things of God, that they may find and feel within them the truth of them; for experience is the best knowledge, and they that have that, have the best seal and assurance of divine truths.

These things require and well deserve our most affectionate prayers, joined with our utmost endeavours for the obtaining of them both for ourselves and others. Solomon, who best knew the worth and way of attaining of them, hath willed us to 'cry for knowledge, and to lift up our voice for understanding, to search for them as for silver, and to dig for them as for hidden treasure.' Prov. ii. And being such precious and invaluable blessings, the apostle thought he could not do better for these Colossians than to pray that 'they might be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom, and spiritual understanding.' The first thing he here petitions for them.

The second is, that they 'might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;' that is, either that they might walk as becometh the servants of the Lord, in all humility, love, and obedience to him; which things, as they are pleasing to all earthly masters, so are they much more so to our great Lord and Master in heaven: or else, that they might walk worthy of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which they had received, by suiting their lives to the rules and precepts of it, which is of all things most pleasing and acceptable to him; otherwise, their embracing the gospel would be so far from pleasing, that it would the more incense and heighten his displeasure; for 'better had it been, (saith St. Peter,) not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after the

knowing it, to turn away from the holy commandment;' and the sad fate of Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, who had received the gospel of Christ, would be far heavier for their contempt of it than that of Tyre and Sidon, and other barbarous countries that never heard it. For which the apostle here prays for the Colossians, that they might walk so that all their ways may be pleasing unto God; which is a good prayer for all Christians.

3dly, Another thing he prays for them is, that they might be 'fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;' for Christianity consists not in barren and empty speculations that like a withered tree afford no fruit, but in doing good works, and like a fruitful vine or watered garden, brings forth fruit in due season; nor doth it appear only in the leaves and blossoms of a specious profession, but in the real fruits of an universal righteousness. Now the fruits we are here directed to bring forth, are those of the Spirit, mentioned in Gal. v. 22, in which all Christians should abound, for the setting forth the glory of God, and promoting their own salvation. The tree in the gospel was cut down for bearing no fruit; and they that are barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ, will find the same fate, to be cut down and made the fuel of everlasting fire: which should make us, not only to pray, but endeavour to be 'fruitful in every good work.'

4thly, The apostle farther prays for these Colossians, that they 'might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness,' ver. 11; meaning, that they might be supplied with that spiritual strength or christian fortitude, that might enable them to bear up under all the afflictions and persecutions of this life; not basely shrinking from the cross of Christ, nor cowardly sinking under it, but, by the grace of God, to be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand; being armed with patience and long-suffering, two of those fruits of the Spirit in which he would have them to abound; that being endued with courage and the power of God, they might despise the frowns of men, and rather rejoice than faint under tribulations.

These are the things which the apostle here prayed for in the behalf of the Colossians, and are indeed fit matter for our prayers in the behalf of all Christians.

Lastly, The epistle ends as it began, with 'giving thanks unto God the Father;' withal mentioning another great and inestimable favour and privilege conferred upon us, very necessary to be explained and applied to us; and that is, 'His making us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' by which we are to understand his fitting of us here, for a blessed estate of endless glory and happiness hereafter. Called here,—

(1.) By the name of an 'inheritance,' to signify the title we have to it, as purchased for us by Jesus Christ; and the tenure by which we hold it, which is not by a term of lives, or a lease

of years, but by inheritance for ever. Hence it is sometimes styled, 'a kingdom that cannot be moved,' and 'an everlasting kingdom;' at other times, an 'inheritance, undefiled, incorruptible, that never faileth or fadeth away,' 1 Pet. i. 3. Again,—

(2.) It is called the inheritance 'of the saints,' to signify the persons to whom it belongs, which is not to all, whether in the church, or out of the church; nor yet to those that live loose, careless, and wicked lives in it; but only to 'the saints,' that is, to such as are admitted into Christ's holy church, and continue true and faithful members of it to their lives' end. For these it is, that 'there is laid up a crown of glory, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give at the last day to all such as love and look for his appearance.' Moreover,—

(3.) It is called the inheritance of the saints 'in light,' to signify the glory and splendour of that happy state; for as darkness is made to represent a state of horror and endless misery, for which reason hell is described to be a place of black and eternal darkness, so light is set to signify a condition of joy and blessedness; and therefore heaven is represented as a place of bright and evershining light.

But how are we made meet partakers of this inheritance of the saints in light? Why, that is by the graces of God's Holy Spirit wrought in us, which alone can fit us for glory. They that delight in the deeds of darkness are no ways qualified for this inheritance of the saints in light; their portion will be to inherit darkness, and to be shut up in the black abyss of outer darkness for evermore. It is the children of light and of the day that are alone qualified to inherit light, and to inhabit for ever in the regions of bliss and glory. What concord hath light with darkness, or what fellowship hath the carnal and sensual mind with pure and refined spirits? These things cannot agree or abide together, and consequently cannot be happy together.

Heaven is the habitation of holiness, where no unholy thing or person can dwell; 'without holiness no man can see the Lord;' and they that cannot see him, can never be happy in enjoying him. Holiness is not only a condition, but a necessary qualification for happiness; and to be made 'meet partakers of the inheritance of the saints' we must be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness; for it is called 'the inheritance among them that are sanctified,' to signify that no unsanctified person can have any share in it. Again,—

Heaven is the region of purity, where no defilement enters; and to fit ourselves to come there, we must 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.' No unclean person, or whoremonger, or adulterer, can be admitted into those undefiled regions; or if he could, he would find no happiness there, where there is nothing to gratify his sensual desires; we cannot see or enjoy God unless we are like him, so the apostle tells us; and he that hath this hope,

'must purify himself, even as He is pure.' 1 John iii. 2, 3. Moreover,—

Heaven is the mansion of peace and love; there is no discord or dissension there, but all the inhabitants of those blessed regions conspire together in perfect peace and amity; they all agree in the worship of their Maker, and join with one heart and one voice in their incessant hallelujahs. Now to be meet partakers of these joys, we must tune our hearts to the same harmony of peace and concord, subduing all that pride, passion, and prejudice, that lead to contention, and labouring for those gracious qualities and dispositions, that tend to the closest union of hearts and minds. In a word, the way to be made meet partakers of this heavenly inheritance, is by the daily exercise of a holy life, and the constant practice of religion and virtue.

Thus I have considered the matter of the apostle's prayer and praises in the behalf of the Colossians, which we see are chiefly for 'spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' And that may teach us to make the same things the subject of our petitions and thanksgivings, both for ourselves and others.

Indeed thankfulness is a debt to be paid for all the mercies we receive, temporal as well as spiritual; our food and raiment are thank-worthy, and we are bid every day to ask for our 'daily bread;' and the good things that relate to the welfare of our bodies, here in this life, exact from us a tribute of acknowledgment and adoration. But the highest acts of gratitude are due for those spiritual blessings that concern the good of our souls, and promote their eternal well-being in another world, such as the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, for both which we are to pray and praise God, as well for others as ourselves.

This was the apostle's precept and practice, to which let us learn to conform ourselves, having a sympathy and fellow-feeling of one another's joys and sorrows, and tendering, as much as in us lies, the good and welfare of one another; so shall we be made 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' To which God of his infinite mercy bring us all, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXLIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FOUR AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MATTHEW ix. 18—27. *While Jesus spake these things unto John's disciples, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him; saying, My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose and followed him,* &c.

THIS gospel for the day gives us an account of two miracles wrought by our blessed Saviour; the one, the raising of a rich

man's daughter from death to life; the other, the healing a poor woman's issue of blood: the latter being in the way to the former. In relating whereof we may observe,—

First, The time and place when and where they were done, both which are set forth in the first words of this gospel; 'While Jesus spake these things to John's disciples;' that is, while he was in or near Capernaum, his own city, or the place of his residence, where the disciples of John came to him with a question, of which we read in the 14th verse of this chapter, 'Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?' Why doth John command us the strictnesses and severities of fasting, and the Pharisees fast at least twice in the week, when thy disciples use no such abstinences or austerities? To which Christ replies with another question, 'Can the children of the bride-chamber fast whilst the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away, and then shall they fast.' Is it fit that the chief guests at a wedding should fast or show any sadness whilst the marriage-feast continues, that is, whilst I, the bridegroom, am with them? But the time is coming, when I shall be gone from them, and then will the time of fasting and mourning come; for joy and sorrow can no more suit together than a new piece of cloth with an old garment, or new wine with old bottles. And then it follows, 'While Jesus spake these things to John's disciples, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him.' The

Second thing to be here observed, viz., the person that here addressed himself to our Saviour, and that was a certain ruler; by whom we are to understand one of the Sanhedrim or great council among the Jews, of which there were two ranks or degrees, called the greater and the lesser Sanhedrim; the former consisted of seventy-two judges, made up of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, who resided mostly in Jerusalem; the latter consisted of twenty-three, who resided abroad in the several cities, to decide the differences that arose in them and the adjacent countries. And of this latter sort was the ruler here mentioned, who was one of the consistory of that city, and dwelt there; of him it is said that he came to Jesus, and fell down upon his knees and worshipped him. This ruler's name (as St. Mark tells us) was Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, who presided in the Jews' particular assemblies, and there pronounced what was right according to law, and thereby ended controversies, and punished exorbitances. This ruler, when he saw Jesus, came to him and fell at his feet. Mark v. 22.

But what was his request to him? Why, he said unto him, 'My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.' St. Mark tells us that she was at the point of death; meaning, that when he came from her she was gasping out her last breath, and he concluded that when he spake to our Saviour, she must be then dead. But yet he had

so firm a persuasion and confidence in Christ's power, that if he would but come and lay his hand upon her, she would recover and be restored to life again: possibly he had heard or seen some of the miracles that Christ had done of that kind, as the raising of Lazarus, after he had been dead four days; the bringing the widow's son at Nain to life again, when he was carrying to his grave; with many others, which begat in him a strong faith that he was able to do the same to his dying or dead daughter. But what did our Saviour hereupon? Why, it is said, that 'Jesus immediately arose and followed him,' and so did his disciples. He raised no doubts, nor made any delays, but went away presently with his disciples to his house.

But as he was going to this ruler's house, 'Behold, a woman which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years,' came where he was. St. Mark tells us, that this woman had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, Mark v. 26. Her disease had run so long, that the flux of blood could not be stopped by any methods of art or physic; which made her, upon the hearing of Jesus and the cures wrought by him, betake herself to him. But how did she apply herself to him, when she came? Why, she made no formal address to him by way of petition or word of mouth, but took opportunity of the throng or press wherein he was, to go behind him and touch the hem of his garment; 'for she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. Upon which St. Mark tells us, that the fountain of her blood was straightway dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague.

This woman's distemper being a legal uncleanness, she thought it might be healed or done away by touching the fringe of that garment, which God commanded the Jews to wear, Numb. xv.; and that made her come by stealth behind our Saviour, and touch the fringe of his garment. Or else, her faith in Christ was so strong, as to be fully persuaded, that the touch of any thing about him was sufficient to heal her; and so indeed it proved, for our Saviour was so well pleased with the strength of her faith, that he turned about, and seeing her, said unto her, 'Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole.' St. Mark and St. Luke have added another passage to this relation, to wit, that upon the woman's touching his garment, Jesus immediately knew in himself that virtue had gone out of him; and turning about in the press, asked, 'Who hath touched me?' To which the disciples replied, 'Thou seest the multitude thronging about thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?' The woman seeing Jesus look about, 'and knowing what was done in her,' came 'fearing and trembling, and fell down before him, and told him all the truth.' Upon which he said unto her, 'Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.' Mark v. 30—35. By which it appeared,

that his garment was sanative, and his touch medicinal, for 'the woman was made whole from that hour.' And this may encourage us in all exigencies to go to this great Physician, who is able so easily to heal all the maladies both of soul and body.

This miracle our Saviour did in his way to the ruler's house, where, as he was going, there came certain persons from the ruler's house, who said unto him, 'Thy daughter is dead; why troublest thou the Master any farther?' Jesus hearing these words, and fearing that the ruler's faith might fail, said unto him, 'Be not afraid, only believe;' which made him go on heavily indeed for the death of his child, but cheerfully enough for the hopes he had in our Saviour.

When 'Jesus came to the ruler's house,' it is said, he 'saw the minstrels, and the people making a noise.' These minstrels were certain persons hired to play mournful tunes at funerals, according to the custom of the Jews and other nations; of which we read in 2 Chron. xxxv. 25; where Jeremiah 'lamented for Josiah, and the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day;' that is, they sang *threnes*, or mournful songs, composed for lamentation on such sad occasions, which is there said to be 'made an ordinance in Israel.'

According to this custom and constitution, our Saviour found these minstrels in the ruler's house, playing their mournful ditties, the people making a noise with weeping and wailing about them; all things preparing with music and other solemnities for the funeral. When Christ came in, 'he said unto them, Give place,' or as St. Mark hath it, 'Why make ye such ado, and weep? the maid is not dead, but sleepeth:' meaning, that he would make her death to be but a sleep, from whence she should rise, as one that waketh out of sleep. But the people, instead of believing, 'laughed him to scorn.'

But when the people were put forth, he took the father and mother of the damsel, with his three disciples, Peter, James, and John, and went in where she lay; and coming to her as one that was asleep, 'he took her by the hand, and the maid arose:' she awaked as one out of sleep, came to life again, and rose up. St. Mark relates it, that Christ, beside taking her by the hand, uttered these words, 'Talitha cumi,' which is, being interpreted, 'Damsel, I say unto thee arise;' and adds, that the 'damsel straightway arose and walked.'

These are the two miracles related in the gospel for this day, the one upon a diseased woman, the other upon a departed maid; and both of them were very great, and far exceeding all the powers of art and nature: for which reason, it is added in the close, that the 'fame thereof went abroad into all that land.' For though he charged them to conceal it, yet the rumour of it spread far and near throughout that country. St. Mark adds, that they were 'astonished with great astonishment;' and elsewhere it is said upon the like occasions, that they marvelled

greatly, and glorified God; the two usual effects of his miracles, to wit, admiration and adoration, both which suit very well with the miracles related to us this day.

For the first, we may justly raise our wonder to the highest pitch of admiration, and, with these in the text, be astonished with a great astonishment, at such amazing effects of the Divine power. And, indeed, if we consider the greatness of the works done by him, the easiness of his doing of them, the usefulness of them to mankind, together with the end and extent of them, we shall find reason enough to fill us with admiration and astonishment.

1st, I say, the stupendous greatness and number of our Saviour's miracles may fill us with wonder and amazement. As Christ was a Prophet above all other prophets, so were his miracles far above all other miracles; no man ever did the mighty works that he did, even in the judgment of his enemies; nor did all or any that were before him, ever come near him in the greatness of the miraculous acts done by him. The Jews of old had a saying, that all past miracles should be nothing in comparison of the miracles of the Messias. And, indeed, if we compare the miracles of the prophets, and all that went before him, they are not fit to be named with those that were done by our Saviour; and if the Jews were not blinded by prejudice, they might from thence reasonably have taken him for the true Messias; for there was no part of the creation that afforded not some instance or other of his Divine power. He had (as a father hath observed) the blessed angels at his call, and the damned spirits subject to his will; he commanded the seas and the winds, and they obeyed him; he guided the fishes in the sea which way he pleased, and did many wonders in the deep. As for men, who were his more peculiar charge, he provided against their necessities, miseries, and infirmities; he fed them by miracle, when their provisions failed; he healed them by miracle, when their diseases were otherwise incurable. He cured blindness from the birth, removed inveterate dropsies, palsies, and leprosies; and staunched issues of blood, which could be no otherwise stopped: yea, he raised persons from the dead, after they had lain some time in the grave. The time would fail me to reckon up the many wonderful works of our Saviour; of which St. John in a proverbial expression tells us, that if they were all put together, 'the whole world could not contain the books that should be written.' John xxi. 25. Again,—

2dly, The manner and easiness of his doing those mighty works, may fill us with astonishment at the greatness of his power; for whatsoever any man else did of this kind, he did it by a borrowed and limited power, which he could neither communicate to others, nor exercise himself, but by God's special appointment: but Christ did all by his own inherent power, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him,' by which

he did what he pleased, how he pleased, and when he pleased, either by himself or by others; being determined by nothing, but by his own wisdom and goodness. This I find enlarged upon by a reverend father of our Church, who tells us, that Christ did all his miracles, even that of raising the dead to life again, with the greatest ease, and without the least difficulty; for he effected these things as well absent as present, as well in an instant as by degrees; for he did them by the applying of his hand, by the touch of his garment, by the word of his mouth, by the motion of his will; to shew that any means would serve, that no means were necessary, that all times and places were alike to the sovereign virtue he employed in doing his mighty works. Moreover,—

3dly, The great benefit and usefulness of his miracles to mankind are sufficient to excite not only wonder, but the greatest thankfulness. For his miracles were all healing and medicinal, designed either to give life or restore it, to promote the good of all men, and to prevent the hurt or evil of any: and therefore we find, when two of his disciples in a great rage urged him to work a miracle, in calling for 'fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans,' he gave them a sharp rebuke, saying, 'Ye know not what spirits ye are of; for the Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' He went up and down still doing good to the bodies and souls of men, and always exerted his Divine power for the welfare and happiness of both. To all which if we add,—

Lastly, The extent of his miracles, or that general influence and benefit that all ages and places have received by them ever since; we shall find abundant cause both to admire his power, and to adore his person.

And this will lead me to the use and application of this discourse, which will be to confirm our faith in our blessed Saviour as the true Messias, and to persuade us all to receive his doctrine, which stands confirmed by so many miracles. This use we are the rather to make of it, because of the many late attempts of some to shake our faith or belief of both. He must be a great stranger to the world, who does not see what great endeavours are using to weaken the credit of Christ's doctrine and miracles, and thereby to undermine the whole christian religion. How far these have prevailed upon too many, whose bad lives have made it their interest and wish that Christ's doctrine should not be true, is easily apparent to any ordinary observer. It is a vicious world we live in; and always the more vice, the more unbelief; which may make us think and fear, that we are not far from that time, of which Christ himself spake: 'When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon earth?' How far it hath failed of late years among us, and how much it is still sinking, is a subject very sad to consider; so that instead of building men up in their holy faith, and carrying on the work

and business of a christian life, we are forced to combat the atheists and the deists, who are still pecking at the foundation. However, if these men's lusts would give them any time to consider, they must needs see such a 'demonstration of the Spirit and power' in Christ's doctrine and miracles, as is sufficient to open the eyes of any, that do not wilfully shut them against the truth, and to convince all that are not resolved against conviction. *Pertinaciæ nullum dedit remedium Deus*, there is no remedy for obstinacy; and they must perish without redress, who persist in their infidelity without repentance. Let us then consider these things in time, that we be not carried away with the error of the wicked. Remember the heavy doom denounced against Corazin and Bethsaida, for despising the doctrine and miracles of Christ. The barbarous nations of Tyre and Sidon, that never heard of a Saviour, shall fare better at the day of judgment, than they who saw his mighty works and believed not. And Capernaum, the place of Christ's residence, where many of his miracles were done, being thereby lifted up to heaven in the height of their privileges, will yet for their unbelief and impenitence be sunk so much the deeper in hell. Wherefore let us 'take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;' but rather 'let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering:' so shall we receive at last the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls; which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCL.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE FIVE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JER. xxiii. 5—9.—*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS*, &c.

THESE words containing both a prophecy and a promise of the Messias, are selected for the epistle for this day, and ordered by the Church to be always read upon the Sunday next before Advent, to preserve the memory of his coming, and to prepare for his reception. Accordingly,

The collect for the day beseeches God to 'stir up the hearts of his faithful people,' to be ready for him, 'that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of him be plenteously rewarded.' To which end,

The epistle begins with a prediction of him in these words: 'Behold! the days come (saith the Lord) that I will raise up unto David a righteous branch,' &c.

The word *ecce*, 'behold,' in the front of them, is never used but to usher in some matter of great weight and importance, and evermore denotes the dignity and seeming difficulty of what comes after it; which is therefore to be received with the greater attention and veneration, as this most especially is. In the following words we have,—

First, A promise of the Messiah, together with the stock from which he was to descend: 'The days come, (saith the Lord,) that I will raise up unto David a righteous branch.'

Secondly, We have a description of his person and government: 'He shall reign as a King and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.'

Thirdly, The benefit and security that should then accrue to his people: 'In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely.'

Lastly, The 'name whereby he should be called; and that is, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' Of each of these briefly. And,—

First, Of the promise of the Messias, together with the lineage or stock from whence he descended: 'Behold! the days come, (saith the Lord) that I will raise up unto David a righteous branch.' Where by 'the days shall come,' we are to understand the latter days, or the last age of the world, called in Scripture 'the last days,' or 'the latter times;' which were the days or age of the Messias, into which we are fallen. St. Peter speaking of him, saith, 'He was manifested in the last days.' 1 Pet. i. 5. And St. John to the same purpose, 'Little children, it is the last time.' 1 John ii. 18.

But because some may ask with the scoffers of old, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' I shall beside this of our text, point out some of the prophecies extant in the Old Testament concerning it. In the prophecy of Jacob we read of Shiloh's coming, together with the time appointed for it, which was at the sceptre's departing from Judah;' Gen. xlix. 10, and that came to pass in the days of Herod. Moses told the Israelites, that 'God would raise up a prophet, not only like unto, but greater than he, and to him they should hearken.' Deut. xviii. 18. And Christ (as the gospel for this day informs us) was owned and received as such. The prophet Haggai declared at the building of the second temple, that this great prophet should come and fill that house with his presence. Hag. ii. 7. And the prophet Malachi, that the Lord whom they sought would suddenly come to his temple. Mal. iii. 1. Both which were shortly after fulfilled in Christ's being presented in the temple, and there instructing his disciples in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

These, and many more that might be quoted, are plain prophecies of the Messias, whom God by the prophet Jeremy here promised to raise up for the salvation of mankind.

But the prophet here, to the promise of his coming, adds the

stock or lineage from whence he descended, and that was from the family of David; 'I will raise unto David a righteous branch.' By which it appears, that the Messias was to be the seed and offspring of David; and therefore he is often mentioned in Scripture as deriving his pedigree from that line, being frequently styled, 'the Son of David.' The prophet Isaiah foretold, that 'there should come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of its root.' Isaiah xi. 1. Which is by all interpreters understood of Christ, called therefore in the prophecy of Zechary, 'the Man whose name is the BRANCH.' Zech. vi. 12. Accordingly we find St. Matthew and St. Luke, in reckoning his genealogy, both deriving his pedigree from the lineage of David; making Joseph his reputed father, and Mary his mother, to descend from that stock. Mat i., Luke xxiv. From his pedigree, so carefully recorded in Scripture, proceed we,—

Secondly, To the description of his person and government, in these words; 'As a King shall he reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice upon earth.' Where three things are prophesied of the Messias:—

(1.) That he should be 'a King to reign' over his people.

(2.) That his 'reign' should be 'prosperous.' And,

(3.) That his reign should be just and righteous, being ever ready to 'execute judgment and justice upon the earth.'

(1.) That the Messias was to be a King, and that he actually reigned over Israel, is evident by the history both of the Old and New Testament. Zechary in his prophecy of our Saviour expressly styles him King of Israel. Chap. ix. 9. 'Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; and shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee!' that is, to the house of Israel, or the people of the Jews. The prophet Isaiah declares, that 'the government was to be on his shoulders,' calling him, 'the wonderful Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace.' Isaiah ix. 6, 7. And nothing is more common in all the prophets, than to style the Messias 'the Lord of Hosts,' and 'the King of Israel.' And the same is the frequent language of the New Testament: 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' say the wise men upon the birth of Christ. Matt. ii. 2. 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel;' said Nathanael. John i. 49. Pilate asking him, 'Art thou a King then?' he answered, 'Thou sayest it:' meaning, that he said true, for so he was.

(2.) And 'as he reigned as a King,' so was his reign prosperous; 'He shall reign and prosper.' Which is a prophecy of the glory and extent of his kingdom, that it should reach over the world, and extend to all the ends of the earth. 'Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end,' saith the prophet Isaiah. 'The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform it,' chap. ix. 8. And elsewhere, that the pleasure of the Lord should

so prosper in his hand, that his kingdom should reach unto all parts, and his dominion to all ages.

(3.) And as he should reign and prosper, so should he 'execute judgment and justice in the earth:' that is, his reign should be not only glorious, but just and righteous; doing right to all, and equally distributing both rewards and punishments. So the prophet Isaiah foretold, that he should 'sit upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it with judgment and justice.' Isaiah ix. 8.

All which things are to be understood, not of any temporal kingdom, as if he were to reign here in the transitory glory and splendour of an earthly monarch; but of a spiritual kingdom, or a kingdom within us, whereby he reigns in our hearts by faith, and governs us by his Holy Spirit. This he told his disciples himself, when suing to him for earthly profits and preferments; he replied to them, that his 'kingdom was not of this world,' but his business was to purchase and prepare for them a better; and to that end he came not so much to make them great as good, and by grace to advance them to glory, to triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and to make all their foes their footstool. This the Psalmist foretold of his kingdom, that 'a sceptre of righteousness was to be the sceptre of his kingdom,' Psal. xlv. 62, which the apostle applies to the just exercise of his regal power, in succouring the faithful, and punishing the obdurate resisters of his will. Heb. i. 8. In this sense it is that he is said to 'reign as a King,' his empire being not so much over the bodies, as the souls of men, where he rules by his Holy Spirit, and subdues all his and our enemies; in which he is likewise said to 'prosper,' all nations coming in, and being made subject to him: 'His dominion is from sea to sea, and his power reaches over all lands.' In a word he reigns over all the princes and potentates of the earth, who veil their crowns to his cross, and submit their sceptres to his sceptre of righteousness: for which reason he is styled 'King of kings, and Lord of lords;' all inferior princes reigning by his power, and decreeing justice by his authority. So that 'all the help that is done upon earth, he doth it himself.' And this will lead me to consider,—

Thirdly, The great blessings that accrue by the coming of the Messias, and they are set forth in the next words; 'In his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell safely.' Salvation and peace are two of the greatest blessings that can befal a people; they relate to the welfare both of body and soul, and that not only in the life that now is, but in that which is to come. To live in peace and safety, is the great comfort and happiness of this life; and to be saved at last, is the joy and blessedness of the next: both these are here prophesied and promised at the coming of the Messias, and particularly to the tribe of Judah and the house of Israel, from both which he descended. Accordingly we read that Christ 'came unto his own;' that is, to the Jews, who

were of his own tribe, stock, and nation, and of them he was sent 'first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,' to reduce the wandering Jews, and bring salvation to Israel; for he tells us, that 'he came to seek and to save them that were lost.' After which he enlarged his favour, and extended it to the Gentiles also, according to the prophecy, that 'to him should the gathering of the people be,' and, 'he should become the desire and Saviour of all nations.'

But how is Judah said to be saved, and Israel to dwell in safety, when neither the one hath received salvation, nor is the other restored to their own country or kingdom?

In answer to this, we must note, that there were some of the Jews and Israelites, that wilfully rejected Christ, 'the righteous Branch of the house of David;' and said with them in the parable, 'We will not have this man to reign over us,' and so obstinately thrust salvation from them. These were they of whom St. John speaks, when 'he came unto his own, his own received him not;' and it is no wonder if they miss of mercy and salvation, who wilfully refuse and cast it from them. 'But to as many as received him (saith the same evangelist) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed in his name.' John i. 12. They that came to him were saved by him; and for others that would not, it could not be expected. Besides, St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, hath expounded Judah and Israel in a spiritual and mystical sense, for those that are truly and by faith such. 'For he is not a Jew (saith he) that is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision that is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart.' Rom. ii. 28. 'Neither are they all Israel, that are of Israel.' Rom. ix. 6. Where the apostle makes the name of Jew or Judah to signify a follower of the faith of Abraham; and a true Israelite to be one like Nathanael, 'in whose spirit there is no guile.' Now it is to all, and only these, that the promise of peace and salvation is here made: for such, by believing in Christ, as Abraham did, shall be saved by faith, as he was; and being made righteous by this righteous Branch, shall grow up and live for ever in peace and safety. And this will lead me to the

Next thing propounded, viz. the name or title here given him; 'And this is his name whereby he shall be called, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' In the prophecy of Jacob, he is styled SHILOH; that is, one that was to be sent. Moses calls him the great PROPHET, that was to reveal his Father's will. In the prophecy of Isaiah, he is called EMMANUEL, which signifies God with us. And here the prophet Jeremy styles him THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS; implying, that he is not only infinitely righteous in himself, but that he communicates his righteousness unto us. In the foregoing verse he is described by his power, 'reigning as a King;' and likewise by his justice, 'executing judgment and justice upon earth;' both these

are against us, who by our sins and offences have rendered ourselves obnoxious to both, being liable to be crushed by his power, and condemned by his justice. But the name here given, the Lord our Righteousness, affords help and comfort to us in this extremity: for though we have no righteousness of our own to plead, and so must be found guilty at the bar of Divine justice; yet having Christ's righteousness applied and imparted to us, and so made ours, we may plead it as our own, and are thereby found innocent and cleared at that tribunal; yea, not only so, but we shall be justified and found righteous, by virtue of his righteousness imputed to us. So the apostle tells us, 'He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.' 1 Cor. i. 30. The word 'righteousness' implies, that he hath in all respects satisfied the law, and appeased Divine justice, by doing all that the law required, and suffering all that the law inflicted on the breakers of it: but then the word OUR being added to it, saying, The Lord OUR Righteousness, signified, that all that he did and suffered by way of satisfaction to Divine justice was in our stead, and for our sake; and so we are justified by his righteousness made ours, as a debtor is released upon his sureties paying the debt. So St. Paul speaks, 'God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' 2 Cor. v. 21. By this means 'mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.' Psal. lxxxv. 10. Which made St. Paul challenge all our ghostly enemies, saying, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' Rom. viii. And all this by Christ's being made 'the Lord our Righteousness;' where it is expressed (as a father hath observed) not in the concrete, but in the abstract, which very much heightens the signification: for it is not sufficient to say, he is righteous, and makes us so, but 'he is righteousness' itself, and hath 'made us the righteousness of God in him.' And what can the wit of man devise, or the heart of man desire more comfortable, than to have the Son of God and his righteousness made ours? by which we appear not only righteous before God, but even righteousness itself; which shews the sense and reason of this name, 'The Lord our Righteousness.'

To all which the prophet adds or infers one memorable passage more, in these words: 'Therefore behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land.' Where God declares, that he will be no more called their deliverer out of Egypt, because he would vouchsafe them a greater deliverance from Babylon; that he would rescue them from captivity, and the miseries they endured in other countries, and restore them safely to their

own land: which deliverance was a type or emblem of a far greater deliverance from more deadly enemies, even from sin and Satan, from death and hell, and restoring us to a better, that is a heavenly country. All which things are signified by the name here given to the Messias, 'The Lord our Righteousness.'

This is the substance of this prophecy appointed for this day's epistle; the use we are to make of it is,—

1. To confirm us in the truth of Christ's Messiahship in whom all the titles, promises and predictions of the Messiah do so plainly concentre and agree.

2. If Christ be a King reigning and executing judgment and justice upon earth, then let us learn to obey and submit to him, and to the powers set up and ordained by him; for it is 'by him that kings reign, and princes decree justice.' He it is that gives them their commission, and it is his authority by which they act; and therefore the apostles bid us to 'be subject not only for wrath, but for conscience-sake;' and to 'submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,' whose deputies and vicegerents they are.

3. From his bringing salvation to Israel and Judah, let us endeavour to have a share in it, and to rely upon it: for 'there is no salvation in any other.'

4. From his being the Lord our Righteousness, we learn where we are to seek for justification, viz., not from any inherent righteousness of our own, for that is nothing, or worse than nothing, and cannot abide the trial; but by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and by faith in him made ours. 'Abraham believed in Christ, and it was counted to him for righteousness:' and to them that follow the faith of Abraham, is the same righteousness imputed also, as we read, Rom. 4. It was the pride of the Pharisees to trust too much to their own righteousness, and to expect justification by the merit of their own works; but the poor Publican, that trusted only to God's mercy, was justified far before them. The reason whereof is given, that they being 'ignorant of Christ's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, submitted not to the righteousness of God, and so lost all the benefit of it.' Rom. x. 3. And therefore St. Paul desired to be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, but to be clothed with his, which alone could cover the multitude of his sins.

Lastly, From his being called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, let us learn to honour and rejoice in this name, saying, with the Psalmist, 'Not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory;' praying with him, 'Lord, deal thou with us according to thy name; that is, forgive us our sins, and justify us by thy righteousness, as thou usest to do to them that love thy name. To which be all praise and glory.

DISCOURSE CCLI.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE FIVE AND TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOHN vi. 1—15.—*Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias, and a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased: and Jesus went up into a mountain, and there sat with his disciples,* &c.

IN this gospel for the day, we have Christ's miracle of the loaves, with the occasion leading to it, and the conclusion which the people drew from it.

The account of it begins ver. 1, with 'Jesus's going over the sea of Galilee,' so called, though in truth it was no other than the lake of Gennesareth; a lake of about a hundred furlongs in length, and forty in breadth, in the lower Galilee; called also the sea of Tiberias, from a city of that name, situate upon the banks of it. Being passed over that sea or lake, 'great multitudes followed' and flocked to him, drawn by the fame of his miracles, and the 'sight of the wonderful cures he did upon them that were diseased;' and indeed so able and cheap a physician could never want followers, who resorted to him from all parts.

The place where 'Jesus went, was up in a mountain,' or a desert place belonging to the city of Bethsaida, as we read, Luke ix. 10. There his disciples found him, and there he staid awhile, and 'sat down with them,' imparting many things to them, and instructing them in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. For the time when this was done, it was a little before the feast of the passover; for the next words tell us, that 'the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.' This was set down not only to denote the circumstance of time, but because, as some tell us, our Saviour took occasion from thence to speak of their feeding upon the true Lamb of God that was slain for the sins of the world, figured by the Paschal lamb, and by his holy and heavenly discourses to prepare them for it.

In this mountainous and desert place they remained awhile, far from any house or home; where the provisions they brought with them being spent, and no other recruits or refreshment being there to be had, they began to be in no small distress; which our Saviour mercifully considered, and miraculously relieved; for 'when Jesus lift up his eyes, and saw a great company come to him,' he had compassion upon them, and bethought of making some provision for them, for many of them came from far; calling therefore Philip to him, he saith unto him, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' or where shall we have money to buy subsistence enough for so great a multitude? 'This he spake,' not out of any diffidence or apprehension of difficulty in

the case, but only 'to prove him,' that is, to try the strength of Philip's faith, whether he had any lively sense or belief of his divine power and ability to help them, and whether he had compassion enough to move in their behalf, and to desire relief for them in such a time of need. This was the end of Christ's saying this to him; not to receive any information or assistance from him, 'for he himself knew what he would do:' he knew well enough how to provide for them, and was resolved to do so.

But what was Philip's answer to him? Why, distrustful enough; for 'Philip answered him, two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little;' meaning, that they had neither money nor provisions enough for half that company, that each may have any tolerable refreshment. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother's answer, though 'one of his own disciples,' was not much better; for 'he saith unto him, there is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?' The sense whereof is, that the best shift we can make amounts to a very slender pittance, and we are in no way or place to furnish out any more; and therefore it were better to dismiss the multitude, and send them away, than be troubled with the cry and importunity of their wants. But Jesus took little or no notice of the distrustful discourse of his disciples, having another and better way to make them sensible of their error; and therefore bid his disciples to 'make the men sit down,' and to place them so in ranks, that they might be the fitter to receive what was administered to them. 'Now there was much grass in the place,' which made it the more easy and convenient for them; 'so the men sat down,' in obedience to Christ's command, though they saw nothing prepared for them; 'they were in number about five thousand,' St. Matthew adds, 'besides women and children,' which increased the number to many more. And then it follows, 'that Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples;' that is, when he had blessed the bread and the fishes, and had given God thanks for them, and implored his blessing upon them, he began his distribution, in the first place, to his disciples. Where two things are observable:—

1. That Christ would neither take himself, or give to others any sustenance, before he had thanked God for it, and craved his blessing upon it; which is a good warrant and direction for our saying grace, (as we call it,) before and after meat: 'Man liveth not by bread alone, (saith our Saviour,) but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' The best bread can afford no nourishment without his word to bless it, and unless he say the word, there is no sap or strength in it. All the nutritive virtue that it hath, is derived from, and entirely depends upon God's blessing; neither can bread strengthen man's heart, unless he command it to do so. We often read in Scripture of 'the staff of bread,' signifying it to be the stay and prop of our

lives; but the word of God blessing it, and commanding it to feed us, is the staff of that staff, and sustains all that virtue in it that sustains us: if God withhold his blessing, this staff will soon be broken; it can uphold us no longer, and we shall sink as much with bread as without it. In the prophet's phrase, 'We may eat much, and not have enough, and drink our fill, and not be filled,' Hag. i. 6; which may teach us, by Christ's example, to implore the blessing of God upon the creatures provided for our food and nourishment. Again,—

2. We may observe, that when our Saviour had given thanks, he distributed first to his disciples; his kindness began with his more immediate friends and attendants, shewing that our goodness and charity is first and principally to be extended to our nearest friends and relations. This, nature as well as reason and religion teach us, that our natural and spiritual relations be first considered in all acts of bounty; for he that 'provideth not for those of his own house and family, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;' and though we 'are to do good to all men,' yet 'especially' and principally 'to the household of faith.'

But to proceed in the miracle; when he had distributed to his disciples, the disciples distributed to them that were sat down; and this perhaps gave the occasion to that ancient practice in the holy sacrament, of distributing the bread and wine, first to the priests there present, and they after to assist in distributing to all the other guests. But however that be, it is certain that Christ here, as master of the feast, gave the several proportions in the first place to his disciples, and then they, as waiters, distributed to all the rest, to every man his portion of bread, 'and likewise of the fishes, as much as they would.' And it follows in the next verse, they were all filled, and their hunger well satisfied. By which we see, that a very small pittance, with God's blessing, can furnish out a meal for many thousands; and a little hard and homely fare, if sanctified with God's word, shall go farther, and fill better, than far more and greater provisions without it. 'A little cake and cruse of water' shall give Elijah nourishment enough to walk in the strength of it 'forty days and forty nights.' 1 Kings xix. 6, 8. A little pulse and water fed Daniel and his servants, and made their countenances look fairer, fresher, and fatter, than all they who fed upon the king's dainties, Dan. i. 12, 15. And here a few barley-loaves and two small fishes multiplied to the satisfying above five thousand persons, and gave them to eat all their fill. God can make a feast of a crumb of bread, and furnish a banquet from a small fish, that shall give better content and nourishment, than the richer fare and luxury of the epicure. 'Better is a dinner of herbs, (saith Solomon,) with the love and favour of God, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith,' Prov. xv. 17. 'The light of God's countenance' shining through the creatures he gives us, will afford better entertainment to our

bodies, and 'put more joy and gladness into our hearts, than the greatest increase of corn, and wine, and oil.' Psal. iv. 6, 7.

By all which we see, that it is the blessing of God that gives all the strength and sweetness to our provisions, and enables them to nourish us; a very little, with that, will serve and suffice a great multitude; but a great deal, without it, will yield no savour or satisfaction. Hence it comes to pass, that the wicked are in straits in the midst of their abundance, and, like Pharaoh's lean kine, devour the fat, and yet are never the fatter; whereas the good man finds comfort in a little, and sits easy and contented under the smaller shadow of his own vine.

But to go on, 'When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.' Gather up the fragments! Why, what fragments could remain of a few loaves and two little fishes, after more than five thousand had eaten of them, and were filled? One would wonder how so small a matter should hold out for so great a multitude, or indeed feed half the number. Sure none could fancy there should be any thing left of so slender a pittance, after so many bellies were filled, or fear that any thing should be lost, where there could be nothing to lose; and yet our Saviour put his disciples upon gathering up the fragments or broken meat that remained, which one would think should be no hard task, and that nothing should be found after so many had divided the spoil.

But what happened, or how did the disciples find it? Why, that the next verse tells us, 'Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley-loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.' Strange! when all the meat they had would not near fill one basket, that after so great a number had eaten and were filled, they should take up and fill twelve baskets with the fragments that were left. Their provisions it seems increased by eating, and, like the widow's cruse of oil, multiplied by being consumed; and when all were fully satisfied, there remained above ten times more than was at first set before them.

This the people saw, and found by their own experience, and were all amazed at it. But what followed upon it? Why, 'those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.' They had heard much of a great prophet that was to come, and that he should come with miracles, and doing many mighty works; this they had learnt from the prophecies of the Old Testament, and were then in an earnest expectation of him; and here beholding with their eyes this great miracle, they all concluded with one voice, that this for certain was the prophet that was promised, and whom they had been long looking for. Their judgment herein was sound enough, and their conclusion well grounded. But these taking him for the promised Messias, began to expect great things from him, that he should deliver them

from the Roman yoke, and restore again the kingdom to Israel, and thereby advance them to power and preferments in the world; to which end they sought to make him a king, and to set him up as their general, to fight their battles for them against their enemies. And no wonder that an oppressed people should seek to make him their king, who could raise an army by a word's speaking, and feed them too by miracles, without taxes and contributions. But Jesus perceiving the carnality of their minds, and knowing his kingdom not to be of this world, departed again to a mountain himself alone, and returned to his former privacy and prayers, from whence he withdrew over the sea again to Capernaum; but those people, who had eaten of the bread after that the Lord had given thanks, missing him and his disciples, took shipping also, and went to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus; and finding him there, said to him, 'Rabbi, when camest thou hither?' hearing that he went not in the ship with his disciples, but walked thither on the sea. But Jesus giving them no answer as to the time or manner of his coming, said unto them, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled,' ver. 26; meaning that they consulted only their own interest, and followed him more for the loaves and their worldly advantage, than for any love to his person or doctrine; and therefore to wean their minds from all such vain expectations from him, he seeks to divert them from these earthly, to more heavenly matters, saying, in the next verse, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you, for him hath God the Father sealed;' that is, set not your hearts on corporal food, nor dream of any earthly greatness or victories from me, for that is none of my business; but raise your minds to that spiritual food that can alone feed your souls to eternal life. This is the food that the Messias is to give you, who is a king of the Father's making, and not of your choosing, and is to be installed in his spiritual kingdom by God, and not by you. This is the use that Christ would have made of this miracle, and not that carnal one, which the Jews and others may fondly expect from it. These are the circumstances that went before, and that followed after this miracle, which is the subject of the gospel, and of our meditations for this day. From whence we may infer the following lessons: as—

1. From Christ's feeding so great a multitude with such small provisions, we may learn to depend upon God's providence in the greatest extremities; for we see he is both able and willing to help us, either by giving much, or blessing a little; 'The lions may lack and suffer hunger, (saith David,) but they that fear the Lord shall want nothing that is good; for God will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that lead a godly life. He that hath given us his Son, (saith the apostle,) how shall he not with him freely give us all things?'

It were endless, as well as needless, to recount the many promises extant in holy Scripture to this purpose, which for our encouragement are backed too with many examples to confirm them. The Israelites were fed with quails and manna from heaven in the wilderness, where ordinary provisions failed them; Elijah was fed in the desert by ravens, who brought him bread and flesh every day; and the widow of Sareptha, with a handful of meal in a barrel, which wasted not, and a little oil in a cruse, which failed not till the day that God sent rain upon the earth, 1 Kings xvii. And here a few loaves and two little fishes served to feed and fill above five thousand men, beside women and children; which may teach us that lesson of the apostle, 'Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God,' Phil. iv. 6; which our Saviour inculcated by many arguments in his sermon on the mount, willing us to 'seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto us.' Matt. vi.

2. From Christ's giving of thanks before he distributed the provisions, we may learn always to crave a blessing before meat, and to return thanks after it. This was our Saviour's practice here, and upon all occasions of this kind; and the apostles have taught us the same; 'every creature of God is good, (saith St. Paul,) if it be received with thanksgiving,' 1 Tim. iv. 4, as if all the goodness of them to us depended upon our giving of thanks, which gives them all their virtue and nourishment. To the same purpose speaketh he in another place, that all things are 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' which give them all their blessing, and without it they cannot do us any good; of which therefore it will behove us to be always mindful.

3. From Christ's multiplying such small provision, to the serving and satisfying of so many, we may be abundantly convinced of his divine power, that he is the Son of God, yea, God blessed for evermore; for none but he that made, preserves, and blesseth all things, could do such a miracle.

4. From Christ's commanding the disciples to gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost, we may learn not to waste any of God's creatures, which he is pleased to afford us, nor to make spoil of his good gifts for the abundance that we enjoy; for this is such a vile abuse of his bounty as provokes him to withdraw what we so idly consume, and to make us know the worth of his blessings by the want of them. Carelessness and profuseness naturally lead to poverty, and many have been brought to wish for that in their penury, which they have vainly thrown away in their prosperity; and therefore, that we may not want, let us take heed that we do not waste any thing that God is pleased to give, but labour rather to improve than consume his blessings.

5. From this miracle of the loaves, let us all concur with the

people in saying, 'Of a truth this is that prophet that should come into the world.' This he abundantly proved by a power of miracles, confirming all that he had said; and therefore his errand being to teach and to save mankind, let us all receive his doctrine, and obey his precepts to those ends.

Lastly, From Christ's turning the minds of his disciples from vain worldly expectations to more heavenly matters, let us learn to wean ourselves from this world, to which we are too much addicted, and set our affections more upon the things above, which are infinitely more worthy of our thoughts and desires; let us labour not so much for the perishing food of our bodies, as the immortal food of our souls. Our Saviour declared himself to be the bread of life, or that living bread that came down from heaven, and is able to bring us there. Let us therefore say with the apostles, 'Lord, evermore give us of this bread, to feed our souls to eternal life.'

DISCOURSE CCLII.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

ROMANS x. 9—10, to the end.—*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*, &c.

HAVING discoursed of all the collects, epistles, and gospels that are appointed for every Sunday throughout the year, I proceed next to those that follow, which are appointed likewise for all the other holidays of the year; wherein we commemorate the lives and actions of the holy apostles, and others, mentioned and remembered in holy Scripture.

And because St. Andrew was the first that came to Christ upon his first appearance, and followed before any of the other apostles, bringing Simon Peter and others after him, as we read, John i. 38, 39, therefore he leads the van of this noble army of martyrs, and has the honour of having his day first solemnized, and his memory celebrated in the service of the Church. Accordingly,—

The collect for the day recommends his example to us, and teaches us to pray to 'Almighty God, who gave such grace to his holy apostle St. Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of his Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay; that he would likewise grant us all, that we being called by his holy word, may forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil his holy commandment, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.'

St. Andrew, for his birth, was the son of Jonas, a fisherman in Bethsaida, a city in Galilee, situate on the banks of the lake of Gennesareth, where he continued to exercise his father's

trade till Christ called him from it, and from catching of fish made him a fisher of men.

At the dispersion of the apostles into the several parts of the world, to preach and propagate the gospel, St. Andrew's province was the country of Scythia, and neighbouring countries round about it; where passing through Cappadocia, Galatia, and Bithynia, he instructed and converted many to the christian faith. From thence he went to Constantinople, where he taught and settled the christian religion; and after that, he is said to have founded a church there for divine worship, and ordained Stachys, whom St. Paul calls his beloved Stachys, first bishop of that place.

After this he passed over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, and Achaia, where he preached the gospel with great success, converting great numbers to the faith, and confirming his doctrine with many signs and wonders; till at last he came to a city called Patræ or Patras in Achaia, where he turned many from paganism to Christianity, and there gave his last and great testimony to it; the manner whereof, as it is recorded by the church historians, was briefly this:—

Ægeas, the proconsul of Achaia, coming to Patræ, where St. Andrew then was, and finding great multitudes by his preaching fallen off from the worship of their gods, and turned to Christianity, was highly incensed with the apostle and people, and endeavoured both with kindness and threats to bring them back again to their old idolatries. But the apostle still confirming them in the faith, and persuading the proconsul to embrace the same, so highly enraged the proconsul, that nothing could appease his fury; which was the more increased, because, as Nicephorus tells us, the apostle had converted his wife Maximilla, and his brother Stratocles, by a miraculous cure of some desperate distempers upon them, which no physic could remove. Whereupon the incensed proconsul commanded him to do sacrifice to his gods, or else he should be put to the same death upon the cross which his pretended Saviour underwent. To which the apostle replied, that he rather desired than declined that honour, for Christ had consecrated the cross by his sacred body's hanging on it; and that he was willing by that instrument to go to him.

The proconsul finding he could prevail nothing upon him, either to renounce his own, or to embrace his religion, committed him to prison; from whence the enraged people would have rescued him, had not the apostle's entreaties restrained them, wherein he beseeched them not to hinder him from receiving the crown of martyrdom. Upon which words, he was presently haled away from the prison, and being scourged by seven lictors, he was led away to the cross, which was somewhat different from that of our Saviour's, being two pieces of timber crossing each other in the middle, in the form of the letter X; to which he was not fastened with nails, as our Saviour was, but tied with cords, to make his

death the more lingering. However, after the offering up his prayers to God, and exhorting the people to perseverance in that faith which he had delivered to them, he resigned up his soul unto God, and in the space of two days gave up the ghost.

This is a short account of the life and death of St. Andrew, the saint of this day; for whose undaunted courage in confessing the Lord Jesus, and constancy in believing in him, the Church hath selected this portion of Scripture to be read as the epistle for this day, which begins thus: 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Where we have,—

First, The duty of every Christian, which is to 'confess with the mouth,' and to 'believe in his heart the Lord Jesus.' And,—

Secondly, The reward or encouragement annexed to so doing, which is salvation; for if thou do so, 'thou shalt be saved.'

The duty is double, part whereof relates to the mouth or tongue, which is to confess the Lord Jesus; and part to the heart, which is to believe his resurrection from the dead.

For the first, to confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, is to own and adhere to him in times of greatest danger and persecution; so did the saint of this day, and so did the other apostles, who boldly confessed Christ before their heathen governors and persecutors; and no threats of imprisonment, or death itself, could make them deny or shrink from him. Of this is that of our Saviour, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven; and whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father in heaven.' Matt. x. 32, 33.

The other part of the duty is to believe in the heart the Lord Jesus, and that God raised him from the dead. Without this, the confession of the mouth will be of no avail; for it is not enough to say with the tongue, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, but we must firmly believe it in the heart, so as to receive his doctrine, obey his precepts, and hold fast the profession of this faith without wavering. And in so doing, we shall surely be saved by him, which is,—

Secondly, The reward here annexed to it, and is great enough to encourage us at all times, and in all extremities, to adhere to him; for the great end of our faith, and consummation of all our hopes, is the salvation of our souls; which, if we obtain by a steadfast belief in him, and a constant abounding in the work of the Lord, we shall find to our comfort, that our labour will not be in vain in the Lord. To which end, let our heart and tongue go together in confessing, and our mind and mouth in believing in the Lord Jesus, and then the end will be everlasting life; for 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'

This the apostle goes on to confirm from God's word, in the next verse; 'For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.' The words are taken out of Isa. xxviii. 16, where God is said to 'lay in Zion a corner-stone and sure foundation;' which though some may stumble at, as the Jews did, yet 'they that believe and trust in him, should not make haste,' that is, should not so hastily go out of the way as to be put to shame by it, for the words in the original signify both. So St. Peter quotes it, 'Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect and precious, and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded,' 1 Pet. ii. 6. In the same sense St. Paul renders it, Rom. ix. 33, where he speaks of our Saviour as a 'stumbling-stone and rock of offence' to some, but 'whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.' The word is diminutive, and signifies that he shall be so far from being put to shame and confusion of face, that he shall have whereof to glory and rejoice in. And this glory and salvation is not confined to a few only, but extends to all that thus confess and believe on him; for 'God is no repecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him,' Acts x. 34. And the same is affirmed here by our apostle, 'For there is no difference, (saith he,) between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him; for whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved:' meaning that God hath now no more regard to the Jews, though once his peculiar people, than he hath to the Gentiles; but all that constantly confess, pray, and adhere to Christ, shall be partakers of that common salvation purchased by him.

Now the apostle's mentioning the calling upon God as a necessary condition of salvation, occasioned two or three objections with relation to the Jews and Gentiles before spoken of.

The first is, 'How then shall they call on him, in whom they have not believed?' This question relates to the unbelieving Jews, who could not call upon Christ, or receive any benefit by him, for lack of faith or believing in him; and so were left in a desperate and forlorn condition.

The second is, 'How shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard?' This question relates to the infidel Gentiles, who not hearing of Christ, and the sound of the gospel not reaching their ears, were destitute of the means of attaining to faith, or believing in him; and so were to be pitied and prayed for, that the light of the gospel might shine unto them.

The third question is, 'How shall they hear without a preacher? How can they hear or learn any thing of Christ, or the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, without some ministers or messengers to teach and instruct them? Having none but idol priests, that keep them in darkness, they must be ignorant and unacquainted with these divine truths.

Lastly, It is asked, 'How shall they preach, except they be

sent?' That is, they must be duly called and commissioned by God, as the prophets of old, and the apostles since were, before they may presume to take the office of teaching upon them, or deliver messages of the mind of God unto the people; for we read of the false prophets, that they ran before they were sent, and God complains of some who came in his name, and he sent them not. So that a lawful call and commission is requisite to qualify persons for the work of the ministry; and then we may say, 'as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' By which it appears, that calling upon God, believing in Christ, and hearing of the word, from persons duly authorised and appointed to preach it, are all necessary links in the chain of man's salvation; for 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;' and both lead in the way to eternal life.

But for a farther answer to the objection of the Jews, the apostle adds, that 'they have not all believed the gospel, for Isaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?' meaning, that if all to whom the gospel is preached, would receive and obey it, they could not fail of being saved by it; but the great fault is, that many will not be persuaded to believe and embrace it, and so thrust salvation from them; for Isaias foretold long since, of many of the Jews, that they would not believe the report made to them of the glad tidings of the gospel, and so were cast off for their infidelity.

Now to clear the justice of God in rejecting his ancient people the Jews, the apostle tells them, that no means requisite to their salvation were withholden from them; but on the contrary, they were all plentifully vouchsafed to them; and nothing but their own obstinate refusal of them, could have brought so heavy a judgment upon them.

Because hearing the word preached by persons sent by God for that purpose, is a necessary means of faith and obedience, therefore he asks the question, ver. 18, 'I say, have they not heard the word thus preached? Yes, verily, (saith he,) their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.' They had many warnings from the prophets, and they had the gospel preached to them by the apostles in every city, according to Christ's command, Acts i. 8; but they turned the deaf ear to them all, and would not hearken to any of their admonitions. Again,—

Because the knowledge of their duty and their punishment were necessary to inform and awaken them, he again asks the question, ver. 19, 'I say, did not Israel know these things?' Yes, they could not be ignorant of them; for 'first Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.' Moses foretold this in the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, that they having moved God to jealousy by that which is no God, meaning their preferring idols

before him, he would provoke them to jealousy by them that were no people, (that is, by preferring the Gentiles before them,) and make them angry to see, that they whom they accounted a foolish nation should be taken in their stead, and become more favoured of God than they.

Moreover, saith he, 'Isaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me.' The words are extant in Isa. lxv. 1; where the prophet brings in God Almighty declaring, that he was called upon by the Gentiles, that were before strangers, when he was neglected by his own people the Jews; and therefore they, meaning the Gentiles, shall have the gospel preached unto them.

'But to Israel he saith, All the day long I have stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people;' meaning the Jews, who are often called a 'stubborn and stiff-necked generation, a perverse people;' whom therefore God cast off, and turned to the Gentiles.

This is the drift and design of the epistle for this day, from whence we may learn many useful and important lessons: as,—

1. We may learn hence, not only to believe in our heart, but to confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, in times of greatest danger and difficulty: so St. Andrew, the saint of this day, did, and so we are all commanded to do. The love of Christ should prevail above the love of this world, and that will carry us through all the troubles and tribulations we may meet with in it. The way to heaven is sometimes beset with briers and thorns, and through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, which will for ever cease when we come there. Let us not, then, be so discouraged by these difficulties, as to desert or draw back from the ways of righteousness; for 'if any draw back, (saith God Almighty,) my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' Yea, he is so far from taking pleasure in apostates and revolters, that he will 'punish them with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.' Wherefore let us not be in the number of those that 'draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the salvation of their souls;' that so, by owning and adhering to Christ here, we may be for ever owned and accepted by him hereafter.

2. This epistle teaches us to call upon the name of the Lord, and to hear his most holy word from persons duly sent and authorized to preach it to us, which are here made the necessary means of salvation: 'How shall they hear, (saith the apostle,) without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?' Where, as hearing is made the duty of the people, so is a commission required in the preacher; and therefore our Saviour directs us to beware of false prophets and teachers, that intrude into this sacred office, and run before they are sent. The priest's lips preserve knowledge, and the people are to seek the law at

his mouth; and no man is to take this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Lastly, We are taught by this epistle to beware of infidelity, and to 'take heed, that there be in none of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' We see the Jews were rejected of him for their obstinacy in not believing in Christ, and the Gentiles were received into favour for accepting of him as their Saviour, and believing in him. Let not this, then, be our condemnation, that light is come into the world, and we love darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil; but rather let us close with the terms offered by him in the gospel, and then we shall receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

DISCOURSE CCLIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

MATTHEW iv. 18, 19, &c.—*Jesus walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers: and he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men; and they straightway left their nets, and followed him*, &c.

THESE words are the gospel for this day, in which we have a further account of St. Andrew, whose memory we now celebrate. And in it I shall observe,—

First, St. Andrew's trade or course of life before he became an apostle, and that was 'a fisherman.'

Secondly, His call to the apostleship: 'Jesus saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'

Thirdly, His ready obedience to his call: 'He straightway left his net, and followed him.' I shall speak to each of these, and for a close recommend the example of this saint to our imitation. I begin,—

First, With St. Andrew's trade, occupation, or course of life, before he became an apostle, which, the text tells us, was the trade of fishing; and so was his brother Peter's, whom our Saviour 'saw casting their nets into the sea, for they were fishers.' A profession very mean and servile, attended with perpetual labour and difficulty, exposing those that follow it to the severity of winds and weather, and the hardships of cold and hunger; neither are their days only spent in continual and restless labour, but their nights too in tedious and ofttimes unsuccessful toil: 'We have toiled all night, (saith St. Peter,) and caught nothing.'

Gain, indeed, doth very much allay and sweeten the difficulty of any employment; and where a plentiful return ensues upon and crowns our labours, there they are not only sustained with patience, but pursued with diligence and delight: but where a

calling consists chiefly in toil, with little or no recompense, where the most unwearied pains and care bring in but a slender and inconsiderable return, that employment may be well enough reckoned base and servile. And such, we know, is the trade of the fisherman, who endures the roughest storms of the day, and the blackest tempests of the night, with very small gains to requite his labour.

This was the profession of St. Andrew and St. Peter, who were a couple of poor mechanic fishermen, that knew little more than how to cast their nets into the sea, and spent their time only with the mute and silly fish; and yet these were the persons whom our Saviour thought fit to make choice of for his disciples and apostles. Which may teach us,—

1st, That there is no profession or course of life so low or despicable, as to exclude any from the favour of Christ, or the grace of the gospel. These two poor fishermen, sons of Jonas, were selected by the Son of God, to be the chief attendants on his person, to hear his doctrine, and to be the eye-witnesses of his miracles. Meanness, it seems, is no bar in God's way, nor any hinderance from his service; the poor, the unlearned, and ignoble are not despised by Him, who is no respecter of persons: yea, if there be any difference, he seems to be more fond of the poor and humble, than of the high and honourable; our Lord himself appeared in the garb of poverty, and chose such only for his retinue. Indeed, he seems to have a more peculiar regard for the poor profession of fishermen than any other; for beside the two brethren, Andrew and Peter, the following words tell us of two other brethren, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were likewise called from their nets to the office of apostles, and from taking of fish were taught to catch men. So true is that of St. Paul, 'Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.' 1 Cor. i. 26. And elsewhere, he is said 'to have chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven.'

Let none, then, be troubled at the meanness of his calling and condition in this world: our Saviour himself disdained not to be a carpenter's son, and, during the thirty years he spent in a private life, he is said to have wrought at his father's trade. His followers consisted only in a train of fishermen and publicans, two very abject and despised stations in the world; but it matters not how low they seem in the eyes of men, whilst they rise so high in the esteem of Heaven: and God having so highly honoured the meanest persons and professions, there can be no reason for any to be discontented at the lowness of his condition.

But why did our Saviour make choice of such mean persons, or weak instruments, to carry on so mighty a work? Why, this was done, that the whole work might appear to be the sole effect of a Divine power and wisdom, that 'no flesh might glory before

him, but he that glorieth should glory in the Lord.' Had our Saviour taken for his apostles the most accomplished orators and philosophers of the world, who, by their profound learning, might have unfolded the deep mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and by their charming eloquence have insinuated these truths into the minds of men, it might have looked like a human contrivance, and the instruments might put in for a share in the glory of the achievement. But when men altogether illiterate, and destitute of all the arts of persuasion, being neither polished by any ingenious education, nor furnished with any of the ornaments of speech, are sent abroad to run down the wisdom of the world, to baffle the finest notions and speculations of the greatest philosophers, and make them all veil to the simplicity of the gospel; this shews it to be entirely the work of a Divine power, that went along with it, and none else can claim any share in the honour and success of the undertaking; for none sure can suspect any subtle or crafty designs in ignorant fishermen and mechanics, who had never seen or learnt any of the arts of sophistry; nor could they propose to themselves any worldly advantage in following him, who called upon them to leave all that they had, at their first coming to him.

In a word, nothing less than the power of God could make the foolishness of preaching triumph over all the wisdom of the wise, and cause the plain simplicity of the gospel to prevail more than all the tongues and pens of the nimblest orators. For this our Saviour thanked his heavenly Father, who had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, that is, to men of weak capacities and mean understandings. And St. Paul speaks to the same purpose, saying, 'That God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, the weak things to confound them that are mighty, the base things of the world, and things despised, yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.' 1 Cor. i.

From St. Andrew's trade and profession, which was that of a fisherman, I proceed,—

Secondly, To his call to the apostleship, in these words: 'Jesus saith unto him, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' This phrase, 'Follow me,' was the constant form used by our Saviour in calling his disciples: thus St. Matthew was called from the receipt of custom, in the same words, 'Follow me,' Matt. ix. 9; from which time forward, he left his publican's stall for the office of an apostle; and from a servant of mammon, became a follower of Christ. Thus St. Andrew here, and Peter and Philip, and the sons of Zebedee, were all called in the same form, 'Follow me.'

The import of which phrase was, that they should sequester themselves from all the cares and incumbrances of the world, to attend his person, to hear his doctrine, and to behold his miracles; to the end that they might be able to teach and instruct

others; for they were to be instruments and ministers to propagate the christian church, which he had planted, to sow it with the good seed of sound doctrine, and, if need be, to water it with their blood.

To fit them for this great and eminent service, our Saviour singled them out to be his disciples and companions, instructing them himself in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, establishing them in the belief of his being the true Messiah and confirming all his sayings with unquestionable miracles.

To attend this great work, he bid them quit all other employments, and follow him: and, lest they should object the necessity of providing for their bodily sustenance, he bids them not to be solicitous about those things, and not to carry with them any purse or scrip, for they should find a peculiar providence to attend them wherever they went.

Neither would he have them meditate beforehand what they should say, for it should be given them from above; from whence they should receive that wisdom, which their adversaries should not be able to gainsay or resist. This was the sense of Christ's bidding his disciples to follow him, which St. Andrew and the other apostles punctually observed. And here it will not be amiss to take notice of two things, viz. the time when they were called, and the work whereunto they were called. For the

1st, The time when our Saviour called St. Andrew and his brother Peter, was when they were honestly and diligently employed in the business of their vocation; for we read here, that they were casting their nets into the sea for a draught, when Christ came by and bid them follow him. And the next verse tells us, that the sons of Zebedee, James and John, were busy in the ship mending their nets, when Christ called them. God approves and encourages a pious industry in the works of our calling, and loves to honour and bless those whom he finds well employed. He passed by those idle drones that indulged to ease and sloth, without casting in any thing to the stock of the public, and lived only upon the spoils of others. Such as neglect the work that they are already set about, are not fit for higher and better employment; but instead of being trusted with more talents, forfeit those they have already. In short, idleness is the devil's way and opportunity of plying them with temptations to do his drudgeries; whereas the diligent employing ourselves in the duties of an honest calling, is God's way, wherein he delights to meet us with his blessings and benefits. From the time of Christ's calling them, pass we,—

2dly, To the work whereunto he called them; and that was, to preach the gospel to all nations, and to publish the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven: a glorious and honourable employment, which the Son of God thought worthy of his coming from heaven to promote, and therefore none of the sons of men may think it beneath them to propagate. 'Follow me, (saith our

Saviour,) and I will make you fishers of men;' which is as if he had said, 'Lay aside your nets, which serve only to inclose the silly fish; I have other and greater work for you, which is to catch men, and to bring in proselytes to the kingdom of heaven. Doubt not of the success, for I that command sea and land will make you fishers of men: you shall not want skill or ability for this service, for I will furnish you with baits strong and powerful enough to draw in all that will take hold of them. Say not, who is sufficient for these things? for my grace shall be sufficient for you; I will make the work to prosper in your hands, and you shall see of the travail of your souls and be satisfied.' This was the work he called them to, and this was the encouragement to follow it. He did not leave them to spread their nets in vain, or to toil day and night and catch nothing; but he promised to be with them, and secure to them the success of their labours. By which they became so expert in this spiritual art of fishing for men, that they brought in whole shoals of converts to the christian faith, and daily added to the Church such as should be saved. From whence I proceed,—

Thirdly, To St. Andrew's and St. Peter's obedience to the call: 'They straightway left their nets, and followed him.' Where two or three things may be worthy of observation; as,—

(1.) The exceeding great promptness and readiness of their obedience; for they no sooner heard Christ's voice in calling to them, but they presently left their nets and followed him: they staid not to consult flesh and blood, nor demurred about what they might lose or suffer in following him, but without any more ado they immediately obeyed his call and followed him. Christ's words had such a quick and powerful influence upon them, as to silence all disputes, to alter the whole course of their lives, and to make them leave all to be his disciples; which may teach us to do the same, to make haste and delay not the time to come to him, knowing that we wander in every step we go from him, and that we never walk aright but in following of him.

(2.) We may observe here, not only St. Andrew's readiness to come to Christ himself, but his forward care and diligence to bring others to him; for no sooner had he discovered the Messias, but he presently ran and told his brother Peter, that he had seen the Messias, and willed him forthwith to go to him. John i. 41, 42. He was not content to be happy alone, but being fully satisfied of the truth of his person and doctrine, was willing that others should partake with him of the benefits of both. Real virtue and goodness are ever diffusive and ready to communicate; and, like the sun, do not inclose but impart their light. Our Saviour's advice to his disciples was, that being converted themselves, they should strengthen their brethren. Accordingly we find, when St. Matthew had left his publican's stall to follow Christ, he invites many of his fellow-publicans to do the same,

who thereupon became his disciples and followers. Philip being called, immediately goes his way, and finds out Nathaniel, and brings him to our Saviour, to be one of his followers. And the apostles, upon the receipt of the Holy Ghost, dispersed themselves into all quarters of the world, to teach and disciple all nations, and to proselyte persons every where to the christian faith: so zealous is true piety for the good of others as well as our own, and so willing to further the salvation of all men.

(3.) We may observe here, not only St. Andrew's readiness to follow Christ, but his constancy and perseverance in keeping with him. Having laid aside his nets, he returned no more to them, but kept close to our Saviour, for whose sake he had left all things else. He followed him in bonds and imprisonment, yea, and death itself; and nothing could allure or affright him from him. We read, indeed, of some that followed our Saviour only for the loaves, and staid with him as long as any thing could be gotten by him; but when that failed, they forsook him, and walked no more with him, John vi. 66. But the saint we remember this day, was none of that number; for he was so far from valuing the things of this world, that he left all he had in it to follow our Lord, nor could any offer of earthly things tempt him to relinquish him. He kept with him as well in the roughest storms of adversity, as in the clearest sunshine of prosperity: he could behold the rack, and other instruments of cruelty, with an undaunted courage, and rather courted than declined any sufferings for his sake. When the governor of Achaia threatened him with the cross on which his Master suffered, he rather rejoiced than repined at it; being as willing to follow him in his death, as he had been in his life. He was so far from being afraid or ashamed, that with St. Paul he gloried in the cross, which Christ had hallowed with his own flesh: and so with great cheerfulness and magnanimity mounted to heaven the same way that his Lord led him.

Thus died the saint and martyr of this day a happy and glorious death, which soon crowned him with endless bliss and immortality.

The application of this discourse will lie in recommending to your imitation the example of this great and eminent saint; exhorting you to tread in his steps, and to be a follower of him, as he was of Christ. To which end, let us first imitate the readiness of his obedience, who immediately obeyed the call of Christ without delay. In like manner, let us who are called by God's holy word, forthwith give up ourselves obediently to fulfil his holy commandments.

Next, Let us shew the same zeal and forwardness in calling others to Christ, as St. Andrew did in bringing Peter and others to him. This will shew us to be endued with such a truly christian spirit, as is tenderly affected towards the good and salvation of mankind.

Lastly, Let us imitate his constancy and perseverance, in holding out with our Saviour to the end; and learn from him, by no terrors or temptations to be drawn from him. This is the best way of celebrating the memory of the saints, viz. by recounting their virtues, and stirring up to imitation: and then by doing as they did, we shall go to the same place where they are gone; and by being faithful unto death, we shall with them receive a crown of life: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. THOMAS'S DAY.

EPHES. ii. 19, 20, to the end. — *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*, &c.

THE saint we are to commemorate this day is St. Thomas, of whose parents and kindred we find no mention in holy Scripture, nor does ecclesiastical history give any account of them; only one author, and he of no great credit, Simeon Metaphrastes by name, tells us, that he was born of mean parents, and brought up to the trade of fishing, but had afterward a very liberal and ingenious education. How this can consist with the meanness of his parents, or upon what this account of his is grounded, does not appear elsewhere.

However, that he was a Jew is certain, and, as some conjecture, a Galilean; that he was among the rest called to be one of Christ's disciples, and reckoned in the number of the apostles, the history of the gospel plainly declares.

That he bore a true love and affection to our Saviour, and was willing to live and die with him, appears from that passage in John xi. 16, where, when Christ had determined to go into Judea, to raise his beloved Lazarus from the dead, the other apostles dissuaded him from going thither, because some of the Jews had threatened, and a little before had attempted, to stone him; but Thomas boldly said to them, 'Let us also go, that we may die with him;' which shewed the constancy of his mind, in adhering to him both in life and death.

When the apostles were sent abroad to plant and propagate the christian faith, the province assigned to St. Thomas was the country of Parthia, where he converted many of the Medes and Persians, with others of the neighbouring nations; and passing through Ethiopia, he came at last to India, where he preached the gospel with that wonderful success, that great numbers of that heathen and barbarous people cheerfully embraced the christian faith every where.

Among the rest, he converted one Sagamo, a prince of the country, whose example was soon followed with the conversion of multitudes of his kindred and people; by which means churches were erected among them, and a sort of Christians, called by the name of St. Thomas-Christians, were settled there; a succession of which is remaining in those parts to this day.

Now, because St. Thomas's preaching was chiefly among the heathens or Gentiles, many of whom he turned from the darkness of paganism to the light of Christianity, and from the power of Satan unto God; therefore the Church hath selected the portion of Scripture read to you for the epistle for this day; in which we may observe,—

First, The great favours and privileges granted to the Gentiles, by their being received into the christian Church.

Secondly, A description of the Church, by the similitude of a house or building. And,—

Thirdly, A short account of the unity and stability of the Church. Of each of these something briefly and particularly. And,—

First, Of the great favours and privileges bestowed upon the Gentiles, by their receiving the christian faith, in these words: 'Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' The apostle had been just speaking of the calling in of the Gentiles, who were before afar off, and excluded by a partition-wall from the privileges of the temple; and what a mighty change was made in their condition, by their embracing the gospel; that things were quite otherwise with them, and very much for the better since their receiving of Christ and his holy word; for 'in times past (saith he) they were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.' This was the sad and forlorn state of the Gentiles, who were in a hopeless and helpless condition; and such is the natural state of all men: but now in Christ Jesus (saith he) they who were sometimes afar off, are made nigh by the blood of his cross; for he is our peace-maker, and by breaking down the middle wall of partition, that was between the Jew and the Gentile, hath made us all one in Christ Jesus. And having abolished the enmity, and reconciled both into one body, we may through him have access to the Father by one Spirit.

And 'now therefore,' (saith he,) we who are descended from the race of the Gentiles, 'are no more strangers and foreigners;' for strangers are wont to be kept at a distance, and are not admitted to the free access of children and kindred. But we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, 'Abba, Father.' Neither are foreigners admitted to the privileges and immunities of natives and citizens; but 'we (saith the apostle) are fellow-citizens with

the saints, and of the household of God:' we are admitted to be free denizens of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, and made members of the church of Christ there.

Our being made fellow-citizens with the saints, is meant of our being made partakers of the grace and favour of God in common with the Jews, who were 'separated from other people to be holy unto the Lord,' as we read, Lev. xx. 24. And being God's peculiar people, severed from other nations to be his, they had many peculiar privileges granted to them above all others; for 'to them appertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and out of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever.' Rom. ix. 4, 5. These were great and invaluable privileges, which belonged to them and no others; for 'in Jewry was God known, (saith the Psalmist,) and his name was great in Israel; at Salem was his tabernacle, and his dwelling in Zion: he shewed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and ordinances unto Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation, nor have the heathen knowledge of his laws.' Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. But the Son of God, 'who had the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession,' hath enlarged these privileges, and called the heathens to the participation of them; insomuch that Gentiles as well as Jews, who by the preaching of Christ and his apostles embrace the christian faith, are taken into his family, become members of Christ's church, and are of the household of God. From whence St. Paul here takes occasion,—

Secondly, To describe the christian Church by the similitude of an house or building: in which three things are considerable; the builder, the foundation, and the superstructure.

For the first, the building of a house requires the head of an artificer to contrive it, and the hands of workmen to finish it. 'Every house (saith the apostle) is made by some man, but he that made all things is God.' The whole world is God's house, and all things in it owe their being to the operation of his hand. 'We are all his workmanship, (saith the apostle,) ye are his husbandry, ye are God's building.' 1 Cor. iii. 9.

But of the christian Church it is more eminently and particularly said, that its 'builder and maker is God:' he is the sole founder of this spiritual house, and alone bears up the pillars and parts of it; it was his own right hand that planted this vineyard, and it is that too that waters, and gives it all its increase. And having found the Author and Founder of this spiritual fabric, let us,—

Next, consider the foundation on which it is laid, or that bears it up; and that is the doctrine or faith of Christ, who is the great Master-builder and Finisher thereof: so we are here told, that the christian Church, and all the members of it, 'are built upon

the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.' Not that the Church is built upon the persons of the apostles and prophets; for then they being mortal, and long since dead, the Church must likewise have decayed and perished with them: but upon the doctrine delivered by the prophets in the Old Testament, and by the apostles in the New; the principal subject whereof is Christ, who is the only true and real foundation, and as it were the corner-stone; in which consists the chief strength of a building, binding the two walls together, which are the two nations of the Jews and Gentiles, of which the Church is composed; and bearing off the violence of storms and tempests, that are more dangerous at the corners of buildings, than at any other part. Accordingly, we find God declaring in sundry other places, 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect and precious, and whosoever believeth in him shall not be confounded.' 1 Pet. ii. 6. And here Christ is called the chief corner-stone, that binds and fastens the building; and the apostles and prophets joined to him, and preaching faith in him, are said to be the foundation that sustains or upholds it: so that Christ is properly both the founder and foundation of the christian Church; and his apostles and ministers are said to build thereupon: 'For other foundation (saith St. Paul) can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. iii. 11; who is therefore said to be the foundation of all other foundations.

But here we may note, that the Church is said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles; not of St. Peter alone, as the church of Rome would have it, but upon that faith, of which he, as the chief of the apostles, made confession in the name of all the rest; and so is built upon them as well as he. And, consequently, his supremacy and infallibility above the rest, is built upon none, or a very bad foundation.

Next to the founder and foundation of the Church, we are to consider the superstructure, or what is to be raised upon it: and here the apostle gives a caution, 'Let every one take heed how or what he buildeth thereupon,' 1 Cor. iii. 10; for some build upon this foundation, 'wood, hay, and stubble, and other combustible matters, that is, errors, heresies, and divisions, which cannot 'abide' the test, but will be consumed at the fiery trial; and such, he tells us, 'will suffer loss,' for 'his works will be burnt, and he himself shall be saved so as by fire;' that is, with much difficulty, ver. 15. And therefore he wills us to build upon it 'gold, silver, and precious stones;' that is, sound doctrine, and the good actions of a holy life: for these will stand the trial and examination of the last day, and bring us to an ample 'reward,' ver. 14. From whence I proceed to consider,—

Thirdly, The stability of the Church, which is here said to be a 'building in or upon Christ, so fitly framed together,' as to gain strength and firmness enough to stand and continue to the

world's end; for we are told elsewhere, that he hath founded it upon 'a rock,' and promised that 'the gates of hell shall never prevail against it,' so as utterly to destroy or extirpate it.' Matt. xvi. 18. He hath not, with the foolish builder, built his house upon a sandy foundation, where every storm of persecution would expose it to fall and ruin; but he hath fixed it upon such a strong and immovable foundation, as to be able to bear the shock of the roughest tempests, and to stand firm amidst all the batteries and opposition of its greatest adversaries; so that we may safely rely upon it in times of greatest danger and difficulty, and build the hopes of salvation upon it.

And because union gains strength, and stability is founded upon unity, therefore the apostle leads us, in the next place, to consider the unity of the Church, which he saith 'is a building so fitly framed together in Christ, as to grow unto an holy temple in the Lord;' meaning, that as the temple of old was but one, so all believers together make up but one temple of the Lord; and that Jews and Gentiles, how distant soever they were formerly, are now so closely united and knit together in Christ, as to constitute one christian Church, to which they all belong, and in which they are to adore and worship God together. Now this unity of the Church consists,—

1st, In the unity of the Head, which is Christ; for as the Church is said to be 'one body,' Eph. iv. 4, so is Christ said to be the 'one head' of that body, Col. i. 18; for though a body may have many members, yet, being all joined to one head, they are but one body; even so the Church may consist of many congregations, but having but one Head, they all make but one church, united to Christ as the head, and to one another as members, Rom. xii. 4, 5: in which sense the apostle tells us, there is but one Lord to direct and govern it, Eph. iv. 5.

2dly, The unity of the Church consists likewise in the unity of the Spirit, 'There is one body, and one spirit;' for as one body hath but one soul to quicken and enliven it, so the Church is animated and actuated by one Spirit, even the Holy Spirit of God, who is in it by his presence, over it by his power, and through it by his providence: so we read, 'By one Spirit are we all received into one body, and made all to drink of one Spirit.' 1 Cor. xii. 13.

3dly, The Church is one by an unity of faith, there being but 'one faith,' or 'form of sound words,' professed in it, Eph. iv. 5, and that is the Apostles' Creed, which contains all the fundamental points of doctrine necessary to be believed in order to salvation, and is that 'one faith once delivered to the saints,' which we are required to 'hold fast the profession of without wavering.' Jude, ver. 3; Heb. x. 23. And when all the members of the Church consent and agree in this harmony of doctrine, then are they one by an unity of faith.

4thly, The Church is one by the unity of the sacraments,

which are the bond or ligaments to hold all the parts of it together. 'There is one baptism,' saith the apostle, Eph. iv. 5, by which 'we are all baptized into one body; whether we be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, male or female, we are all one in Christ Jesus.' Gal. iii. 28. And 'we being many, are one bread and one body, eating the same spiritual meat, and drinking the same spiritual drink.' By which we are united together in one fellowship and communion. And,—

Lastly, The Church is here said to be one by the unity of the foundation, being 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. For as a house built upon one foundation, though it may have many rooms and apartments, is but one house; even so the Church, being built upon one foundation, though it have many congregations for the convenience of worship and discipline, is yet but one church; in which 'we also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;' that is, being thus united in Christ, we are built up as so many temples of God, in which he is pleased to reside as an inhabitant, and to communicate the influences of his grace and presence by his Holy Spirit.

Thus we see the sense of the epistle for this day: from whence we may learn,—

1. To bless and praise God for the enlarging his Church, by the accession and admission of the Gentiles, whereby they, who before sat in darkness, and the regions of the shadow of death, have a marvellous light shining to them; and we who spring from that stock are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven; which is a matter worthy of our greatest praises and thanksgivings.

2. From the stability of the Church, and Christ's promise to preserve it, let us learn to keep close and steady to it, by a firm adhering to its faith, frequenting its worship, and continuing steadfast in its communion. And because out of the Church there is ordinarily no salvation, let us not desert it by apostasy, or depart from it by infidelity; but let us, by the example of St. Thomas, the saint of this day, hold fast to it, and persevere in it to the end.

Lastly, From the unity of the Church, let us learn to unite in its worship and service, and with one mind and one mouth glorify God in it together. Christ having 'given us first apostles, then prophets, then pastors and teachers, for the edifying of his Church in love,' and building of us up in our most holy faith; let us all join and build upon that foundation, still 'keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,' till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; which God grant, for the merits of his Son, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLV.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. THOMAS'S DAY.

JOHN XX. 24, to the end. — *Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came: the other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,* &c.

THIS gospel for the day gives us some farther account of St. Thomas, here called Didymus; it being usual in those days for those that travelled into several countries, to take two names of the same import in different languages, the better to converse with the different people where they came; so St. Peter had to that name added that of Cephas, both which signify a stone. And thus St. Thomas was likewise surnamed Didymus, both which signify a twin.

From the name pass we to some more material things relating to this apostle. And here to pass by the slowness of his understanding, intimated in that passage, John xiv. 4, 5; where our Saviour, speaking to his disciples of his departing from them and going to his Father, tells them, that they knew both the place and the way whither he was going; to which Thomas replied, that 'he knew not whither he was going,' and much less 'the way that led to it,' though Christ had just before told him: our Saviour, to comply with the weakness of his apprehension, told him again, that he was returning to heaven from whence he came, and that he himself was the way thither, where all that believe in him shall surely follow.

But the principal thing related in this gospel, is St. Thomas's behaviour and discourse touching our Saviour's resurrection. In which we have an account,

First, Of the backwardness of his faith in that great point, and the palpable evidence he required therein for his satisfaction.

Secondly, Of the full conviction and assurance of his faith in it afterwards, together with the ground and reason of both. For the

First, The backwardness of St. Thomas's faith in this great article of Christ's resurrection, that may be easily gathered from the many circumstances that attended this great action. In the evening of that very day whereon he rose, which was the first day of the week, St. John tells us, in this chapter, that the disciples were assembled together in a private house, and shut the doors for fear of the Jews, to avoid the dangers they might meet with from those that opposed and sought to hinder his resurrection; but in this privacy, Christ, by an act of his divine power, opened the doors, and came in among them, saluting

them in that common form of salutation, 'Peace be unto you,' ver. 19. At whose approach, St. Luke tells us, that they 'were terrified and affrighted as if they had seen a spirit,' taking him at first for a spectre or apparition: to remove which fear, Christ shewed them his hands and his side, bidding them to 'handle and see him, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have;' withal, calling for meat, and eating before them, by which they were delivered from the surprise, and 'were glad when they saw the Lord.'

At this meeting, St. Thomas 'was not with them when Jesus came,' the disciples not being then come together after their dispersion upon our Saviour's suffering: however, 'the other disciples said unto him, We have seen the Lord;' letting him know how he came in among them, and gave them plain proof of his being alive again.

But Thomas obstinately refused to give any credit to them, saying, 'that except he saw in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into his side, he would not believe.' A strange piece of incredulity in Thomas! who, beside the report of the apostles, knew that the prophets had plainly foretold his resurrection, and that Christ had often told him, that 'he must rise again from the dead.' He could not but know his power of doing it, from what he had seen of raising Lazarus and others from the grave; and yet after all this, and many other miracles which his own eyes had seen, to doubt of a truth so clearly revealed, and so well attested, could not but seem very strange and unaccountable.

But our Church, in the collect for this day, hath given us some account of this matter; to wit, that 'God Almighty suffered his holy apostle Thomas to be doubtful of his Son's resurrection, for the more or better confirmation of our faith in that great article:' for had all the apostles presently believed the first report of it, they might have been thought a company of easy, credulous persons, that could believe any thing as they would have it, and that they had a mind to impose upon the world by a cunningly devised fable of their own inventing or spreading; which must have proved a great stumbling-block or hinderance to the faith of future ages. Now,

To prevent this dangerous prejudice, God was pleased to permit some of them to fall into very great doubts about it; and to require the utmost satisfaction that distrust and infidelity itself could desire. When those pious women, who were first at the sepulchre, and found not the body of Christ, came and told the apostles, that he was indeed risen, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who declared him to be alive; it is said, 'their words seemed unto them as an idle tale, and they believed them not.' Luke xxiv. 11. They took it for a story begotten only by the strength of fancy and desire, in them that easily believed what they earnestly desired: yea, we find here, that when our Saviour

came into the room where they were with the doors shut, they took him at first for a mere phantom or apparition, and would not presently believe it was he. And when they after told Thomas of it, who was then absent, he utterly rejected their news, and refused to give any manner of credit to it without better evidence; which things were permitted by God, to increase the evidence, and to give the strongest confirmation to this truth, that it was capable of, for the benefit of posterity.

But how was St. Thomas cured of this obstinate infidelity? Why, 'in eight days after,' which was the next Lord's-day, our Saviour made another appearance to his disciples, when Thomas was present: for 'being within, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said again, Peace be unto you.' Where, looking upon Thomas, he called to him, saying, 'Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believing.' By which he condescended to give him all the satisfaction he desired, letting him see and feel the wounds made in his hands by the nails, and thrusting his hand into the hole made in his side by the soldier's spear; who being convinced by such plain and palpable proofs that it was indeed he, and in the same body that he suffered in, his faith revived, and made him with wonder and joy to cry out, 'My Lord and my God.' His doubts now all vanished on a sudden, and a clear convincing light was let in upon his soul, by which he cheerfully received him for his Lord and Master; and having rescued himself from the power of death, he calls him his God, upon whom he may safely rely for life and salvation.

Thus we see both the backwardness of St. Thomas's faith at first in the great point of Christ's resurrection, and likewise the full conviction and satisfaction he after received about it. By both which God Almighty hath given his Church an instance to confirm us in the belief of this great truth beyond all farther doubt or contradiction. And they must be monsters of infidelity and ingratitude, who shall call in question the truth of our Lord's resurrection, after so full evidence and confirmation of it.

But what was our Saviour's saying, or carriage to St. Thomas upon this solemn profession of his faith in him? Why, our Saviour said unto him, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.' Where he partly blames the backwardness of his faith, that he was so hardly brought to it; and partly commends him, that he believed at last upon what he had seen. And it is as if he had said, Thomas, thou dost well to believe thine own eyes, and to be convinced by the evidence of thy own sight; but it had been much better if thou hadst believed sooner upon my word, and the report of the other apostles. So that from these words of our Saviour, we may gather these two things,

1st, That to believe upon the testimony of our senses, is sufficient to salvation. And,

2dly, That to believe upon the testimony of God without it, is a more excellent and commendable act of faith, and will be attended with a greater reward; for he more especially pronounces them 'blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.'

1st, I say, That to believe upon the testimony of sense, is sufficient to salvation; for our Saviour accepted and approved of St. Thomas's faith, which was grounded upon the sight and feeling of the wounds of his body. And upon this was the faith of the apostles and others, in a great measure, founded: for when they doubted the reality of his resurrection, and took him for a ghost or spectre, he shewed them his hands and his feet, bidding them to handle him and see him; 'For a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have:' where he appeals to the judgment of their senses about the truth of his body; that it was he himself, and that he was risen in the same body in which he suffered, according to the predictions of the prophets, and as he himself had told them. And Christ was well pleased with the faith and conviction that proceeded from that sensible demonstration; for God hath given us senses, not barely for the uses of this life, but for the services of the next, to be instruments of righteousness unto holiness, to administer to God's glory, and to promote the piety and devotion of the soul. Seeing we say is believing, and 'faith comes by hearing;' and 'what we have seen with our eyes (saith St. John) and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you.' And when we use our senses to these purposes, we exalt and sanctify them; 'Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed.'

But our Saviour pronounces a greater 'blessedness on those that have not seen, and yet have believed:' to signify to us, that to believe upon the testimony of God's word, is a more noble and commendable act of faith, than to believe upon the testimony of our senses. For if we believe the witness of men (saith the apostle) the witness of God is greater, and carries better evidence and conviction.

And this is the faith of all that have, or shall live since our Lord's ascension into heaven; for we cannot now behold him with our bodily eyes, as they did who lived in the days of his flesh; and so we cannot have that sensible evidence by seeing and handling of him, as they had. But yet we have that which is much better: for beside the testimony we have from their senses and infidelity, we have the testimony of God's word, which St. Peter styles a more sure word of prophecy, upon which we may more safely rely; together with that rational evidence and assurances of the truth of things, that is abundantly enough to satisfy any wise or sober man, though he did not see the things done before his own eyes.

And this is a more acceptable and rewardable sort of faith,

than that which is in a manner forced upon us by the impressions of our senses, as being received upon the better foundation of divine revelation: in the former, the senses may put in for some share of the honour, being the main motive of believing; whereas the latter depends entirely on God's word, and gives him all the glory. Beside,

The testimony of our senses is not half so sure and certain, as that of divine revelation: for our senses are fallible, and may, and do often deceive us: sometimes the organs may be indisposed, and so receive things amiss; sometimes the object may be too remote, and so not discern it aright; sometimes again, the object may be too splendid and glorious, and so dazzle and confound the sight: in all which, and in many other cases, we may not safely rely upon the evidence of sense.

But the word of God is certain and infallible, that is, an unerring guide that cannot fail, or lead us amiss; and so we may firmly rest and rely upon the testimony thereof. For which reason St. Paul declares, that we Christians 'live by faith, and not by sight;' 2 Cor. v. 7; meaning, that we depend more upon revelation than sense. And elsewhere, 'We look not to the things that are seen, for they are temporal and uncertain; but we look to the things that are not seen, for they are eternal, and abide for ever.' 2 Cor. iv. 18.

But how must our faith be qualified to attain this blessedness? Why,

(1.) It must be sincere and unfeigned. St. Thomas's faith, though slow, was yet sure and sincere; and so must ours be, not resting in an outward profession, but real, working by love, and appearing in the fruits of righteousness.

(2.) It must be hearty and affectionate, as his was; moving all the powers and passions of the soul, and making us to cry out with him, 'My Lord and my God:' putting our whole trust and affiance in him.

(3.) Our faith must be well-assured, and confident; not fluctuating in uncertainties: for a wavering faith will soon fail, and be shaken with every appearance of difficulty.

(4.) It must be honest, and accompanied with integrity and a good conscience, in discharging all the duties that belong to the place or station wherein God hath set us. And,

Lastly, It must be constant and resolved, not sinking into despondency, or staggering through unbelief, but weathering all the storms of persecution with a fixed and resolute mind, and holding out steadfast unto the end. So did St. Thomas the saint of this day, who firmly adhered to his Saviour, preaching his resurrection, and propagating his religion with great success among the Indians, till the Brachmans, fearing the downfall of their idolatries, privately ran him through with a lance, and thereby brought him to the crown of martyrdom: whose constancy and faith we are exhorted to imitate and follow.

'These and many other signs did Jesus (saith St. John) in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name:' which is the great end and design of this day's gospel.

Upon the whole then, let us learn from hence to have a firm and unshaken faith in Christ's resurrection; of which though God permitted Thomas to entertain many and great doubts, yet was it chiefly, that by his satisfaction we might the more perfectly believe it without any farther doubt or scruple; and though we cannot now see and feel his wounds, as Thomas did, yet we ought upon the foundation of his incredulity and conviction to build our faith the more strongly in it. And if we truly believe it upon the credit of divine revelation, as it stands confirmed by the doctrine of the prophets and apostles, our faith will be more honourable, and receive a greater reward, than if we saw it with our own eyes. And this we should the rather do, because some sceptics and libertines in our days are fallen into a disbelief and denial of this great article, upon which the whole fabric of the christian religion stands, and by that means are led into atheism and an utter forgetfulness of God. Wherefore let us be no longer faithless, but believing in this great point of Christ's resurrection; so shall we ere long partake of the merits of his death, and the glories of his resurrection: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

ACTS ix. 1—23.—*And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he would bring them bound to Jerusalem*, &c.

THE epistle for this day gives an account of the time, manner, and other circumstances of St. Paul's conversion; shewing what he was before, and what he was after it.

Before his conversion he went by the name of Saul, and was a very grievous and bloody persecutor; for he 'breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, and desired a commission from the high priest to bring all of this way, whether men or women, bound to Jerusalem,' to inflict cruelties upon them. But as he journeyed and came near to Damascus, there suddenly shined round about him a great light from heaven, which struck him with that great terror, that he presently fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'

Christ interprets all the injuries and indignities done to his members, as done to himself, and is sensibly touched with their cries and groans; and will, without repentance and amendment, deal with their persecutors accordingly.

The strangeness and loudness of the voice, breaking out like a clap of thunder upon him, made him think it to be the voice of God, and drew that question from him, saying, 'Who art thou, Lord?' To which he received answer, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.' Where he minds him again, that he feels the wounds of his persecuted servants, and all the cruelties exercised on their bodies light upon him; and inasmuch as ye have done these hardships to one of these, ye did them unto me; withal telling him, that he were best forbear these fierce proceedings against him, and not be refractory to his commands, which would draw greater evils upon him; for 'it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks;' which is a proverbial speech taken from restive cattle, who are wont to fling and kick against the goad, and to draw back the more they are pricked forward; which brings more and harder blows upon them, than otherwise they would have. The expression signifies to be refractory to government and discipline, which does but involve them in greater guilt and punishment; and so the words were advice to Saul, not to be refractory, but obedient to the commands given him; for he could not withstand God's motion and calling, and therefore he were better yield quietly to it, than draw back, which would draw greater plagues and punishments upon him.

Saul, upon the hearing of these words, fell into a fit of 'trembling and astonishment.' God can strike the most bloody persecutors with panic fears, and make the sturdiest sinners to quake and tremble. So he dealt with Pharaoh for persecuting the Israelites; and because he refused, upon God's command, to release them from their hard bondage, he was followed with so many plagues and judgments, as brought down his haughty spirit, and forced him to beseech Moses to intercede for him, as we read in the book of Exodus. The like was done to Nebuchadnezzar, who for exalting himself above God, was humbled beneath the dignity of a man, and turned a grazing among the beasts of the field. The like fate befell Herod, who for accepting the vain applause of the multitude upon an oration made to them, crying it up for the voice of a god, and not of a man, was degraded below his species, and became a prey for worms. And Saul here, for persecuting the disciples of the Lord, was seized with extraordinary fears and tremblings, which made him stoop and say, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' So did St. Peter's converts, who being pricked at the heart for what they had done to Christ's disciples, asked Peter and the other apostles, 'Men and brethren, what must we do?' Acts ii. 37. The same was said by the jailor, Acts xvi. who having in an unusual way lost his prisoners, and fearing what might be done to him, came trembling,

and fell down before Paul and Silas, saying, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' ver. 29, 30. So did one of those very apostles, who in a fit of trembling said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' signifying his readiness to obey his commands, if he did but know his pleasure. Whereupon the Lord bid him 'arise, and go into the city, and there it shall be told thee what thou must do.'

And we shall find afterward, that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. In the mean time, we are told what befell him and his companions in the way; for the next words declare, that 'the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the voice' of the thunder, 'but seeing no man' that spake out of it. And Saul too was struck with blindness, for 'when he arose from the earth, and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man.' Whether his eyes were dazzled with the splendour of the lightning that shined round about him and confounded his sight, or whether he was smitten by a divine hand from heaven, is not here said. Indeed,—

All sinners, and especially persecutors, are spiritually blind; for they see not the heinousness of their faults, nor discern the evil and error of their ways, but walk on still in darkness, having the eyes of their understanding so blinded, that the light of the gospel cannot shine unto them: and we may say of all persecutors, as our Saviour said of his, 'They know not what they do.'

But beside this, Saul was here struck with a corporal blindness; for he could not see his way, but was 'led by the hand, and brought to Damascus,' where he continued 'three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink;' being as it were in a trance, that deprived him both of his sight and appetite. However,—

The Lord having bid him go into the city of Damascus, where it should be told him what he must do, God had there provided one Ananias, a religious and devout man, supposed to be one of the seventy disciples; him the Lord ordered in a vision to 'arise and go into the street called Straight, and to inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth.'

Here began Saul's conversion, prayer being the first act of turning from sin unto God, and is sometimes made to signify the whole of conversion. By this, he who before persecuted all that called upon the name of Jesus, now prays himself, calling upon the same name. In this prayer he is said to be in an ecstasy; and then (as it is supposed) it was, that he 'was caught up into the third heaven, where he saw and heard things that were unutterable;' being at the same time fully instructed in the mysteries of the gospel; which made him say afterward, that he 'received the gospel not from man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ,' Gal. i. 12. In this vision also it was, that 'he saw one named Ananias coming to him, and laying his hands upon him, that he might receive his sight.'

Ananias hearing the name of Saul mentioned in the vision, excepted against the man, saying, 'Lord I have heard by many, how much evil he hath done to the saints at Jerusalem, and that he had then authority from the high priest to bind all that called upon his name.' To whom the Lord replied, 'Go thy way,' the man is changed, and become another man than he was; 'he is now a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.' From a persecutor, he is to be a publisher of me to the world, which he shall freely do, notwithstanding all the troubles and persecutions he may meet with for my sake; for I will arm him against them, by shewing him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake, and frame him to an invincible courage and patience in bearing them; so that how fierce soever he hath been against me, he shall henceforth be a champion to defend my cause, and shall decline no kind of dangers or deaths to promote and propagate it.

Hereupon Ananias, instructed by the vision, went his way, and entered the house where Saul was; who was likewise prepared by the vision to receive him. Being come, he put his hands upon him, and said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost,' to be fitted for the service of Christ's church, to which thou art designed. Upon which words, 'there immediately fell from his eyes as it had been scales,' and he received his sight forthwith, and arose and was baptized; at which time his name was changed from Saul to Paul. And having received meat after his long fasting, he soon recovered strength, and remained awhile with the disciples at Damascus.

Thus we see what went before his conversion, together with the miraculous manner and circumstances that attended it.

Let us next see what followed after his conversion: and here we are to consider his great diligence and zeal in preaching the gospel, the many difficulties and discouragements he met with in it, and lastly, the death he underwent for it; which take up the remaining part of the history of this great apostle.

For the first: After his conversion, it is said, 'he straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.' He presently set about the work to which he was called, and publicly preached in the Jewish synagogues, that Christ was the promised Messias, and that eternal Son of God that was to be the Saviour of mankind.

At which all that heard it were amazed, that he who was lately so furious a persecutor, should of a sudden become not only a professor, but a preacher of that faith which he sought so violently to root out; saying within themselves, 'Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither to that intent, that he might bring them bound to

the chief priests?' This startled them at first, to behold so great and sudden a change in him, knowing what a hand he had in the stoning of Stephen, and what bloody designs he had against the Christians in his coming to Damascus. 'But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the very Christ.'

After which he withdrew into the parts of Achaia, where he spent the first-fruits of his ministry, preaching up and down for three years, and planting Christianity among them. From whence he went to Asia, Greece, and round about to Illyricum, to Rome, and to the utmost bounds of the western world; where, as Eusebius and others relate, he preached the gospel in the British islands.

After this, he removed to Antioch, where the disciples, who were before called Nazarenes from Jesus of Nazareth, were first called Christians. From thence he departed to Seleucia, and so to Cyprus, where, at Salamis, a great city in that island, he preached the gospel to the Jews, and converted many to the christian faith.

From that place he went to Paphos, where Sergius Paulus was proconsul and governor of the island, a man of great wisdom and prudence, whom he brought over to Christianity during his residence there; and from him (as some think) he took the name of Paul.

After that, he went to Perga in Pamphylia, and so to Iconium and Lystra; where he and Barnabas did a miraculous cure upon a certain cripple, that had been lame from his mother's womb, whom they by a word's speaking restored to his feet, and made him walk about. Upon sight whereof, the people cried them up for gods in the likeness of men, and would have done sacrifice to them, had not the apostles with great care and importunity prevented; which made them preach against idolatry, to turn them from these vanities to the living God.

But the journeyings and travels of this apostle for the propagating the faith of Christ are so fully related in the Acts of his Apostles, and his Epistles to the several churches, that I shall refer the reader to them, and trace him no farther than Jerusalem, the scene of his sufferings, and from thence to Rome, the place of his execution and martyrdom. In his journey to Jerusalem, the people, fearing what might befall him there, earnestly dissuaded him with tears in their eyes from going thither. To whom he stoutly replied, 'What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' Acts xxi. 13. At his coming there, he soon met with that opposition, both from the Jews and the Romans, that brought him into bonds and imprisonment. They charged him with heresy, blasphemy, sedition, and turning the world upside down. The answer whereunto brought him before magistrates and tribunals;

where Tertullus and other glozing orators aggravated his pretended crimes, to instigate their cruelties against him. Thus was he brought before Felix the governor, before Festus and Agrippa, to answer the false accusations laid in against him; which he did with that magnanimity and courage, with that assurance and force of reasoning, that daunted his adversaries, turned the consciences of his accusers upon themselves, and made his very judges to tremble.

His appeal to Cæsar led him to Rome, where the governors had resolved to send him. When he came there, which was in the reign of Nero, he found no favour, but many frowns and hardships from that cruel and bloody emperor.

About that time, Nero had raised a general and bitter persecution against the Christians, upon a pretence of their firing of the city; and finding Paul a preacher and ringleader among them, and having, as St. Chrysostom relates, converted one of his concubines, who refused to yield to his impure embraces, in a great rage commanded him to be cast into prison, and in a little time ordered his execution; which, being a freeman, was not by crucifixion, but beheading. The place appointed for his execution was the Aquæ Salviæ, about three miles from Rome; where being led out, after some solemn preparation, he cheerfully submitted his neck to the fatal stroke.

Thus died this great apostle, who having fought the good fight of faith, and finished his course with patience, received first the crown of martyrdom, and after that a crown of glory. From whence we may learn two or three useful lessons.

1. Not to despair of the conversion or amendment of the greatest sinners; for we find here a persecuting Saul turned into a praying Paul, and one of the greatest of sinners become one of the greatest of saints. By whose example we may encourage ourselves with hopes of grace to repent, and of mercy and acceptance upon our repentance, provided we bring our wills and best endeavours towards it.

2. Let us adore that miraculous grace given to this apostle for the benefit of the christian church, and bless God more particularly for the advantages we have received from his great travail and pains. For church historians tell us, that he was a great instrument of planting the gospel in these British islands, whereby we Gentiles, who before sat in darkness, have the light of divine truths now shining out upon us; a mercy for which we can never sufficiently praise God, nor honour the memory of those saints, by whom such great favours are conveyed to us.

3. From St. Paul's indefatigable pains and industry in the work whereunto God had called him, let us learn diligence in the calling and station wherein God hath placed us. And,

Lastly, From his constancy and perseverance in it to the last gasp, let us learn never to be weary of well-doing, but to hold

out in it to the end; and then being with him faithful to the death, we shall with him too shortly receive a crown of life; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

MATTHEW xix. 27, to the end.—*Peter answered and said unto Jesus, Behold! we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in his throne of glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold,* &c.

THESE words are selected for the gospel on St. Paul's day, because he was one of those that forsook all worldly interest and relations, to attend the work and business of his Saviour. And though he was none of the twelve apostles, yet had he the honour of being an apostle in extraordinary, and to be immediately called in a way peculiar to himself, as hath been shewed in the epistle for the day.

This gospel for the day brings in St. Peter asking in the name of the rest, what reward they were like to have for this their self-denial? 'Peter answered and said unto Jesus:'—which words being an answer to some foregoing discourse of our Saviour's, will lead us back to the sixteenth verse of this chapter; where we read of a certain young man coming to Christ, and asking 'what he should do to inherit eternal life?' Christ answered him, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;' particularly mentioning those against murder, adultery, theft, and bearing false witness; as also that of honouring father and mother, and loving our neighbour as ourselves. To which he confidently replied, that he had observed all these things from his youth; asking, what he lacked farther to complete his felicity? Our Saviour told him, that 'if he would be perfect,' and attain to what he desired, 'he must go and sell what he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him.' At which the young man drew back, and 'went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions, which he was not willing to part with upon such easy terms. Whereupon our Saviour discoursed to his disciples, how hard a matter it was for a rich man that trusted in his riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

St. Peter, upon the hearing of this discourse, 'answered and said unto Jesus, Behold! we have forsaken all and followed thee;' we have done what this young man refused to do: 'what shall

we have therefore?' meaning, What benefit or advantage shall we receive for so doing? for none are willing to leave all for nothing, or to follow a master that pays no wages. Gain is the spur to industry, and it is the hopes of profit that excites and encourages endeavour: no man is pleased with labour in vain, or to attend a bootless and unprofitable service. It is natural and reasonable to inquire, *Cui bono?* what shall we get by following a new master, and altering the former course of our life? This is the sense and reason of St. Peter's question here, 'What shall we have therefore?' Which is as if he had said, 'We have stripped ourselves of all for thy sake, and left ourselves nothing, to follow thee; we have ventured hard in forsaking all that we had: what reward may we expect for running so great a risk?

Some think that St. Peter herein aimed at some worldly greatness and preferment, that he expected by following of Christ: like the Jews, who looked for a glorious and pompous Messias to advance them in the world, to free them from the Roman yoke, and restore them to their ancient liberty and glory; and so would not close with our Saviour, who came in that meanness and poverty, from which they could promise themselves nothing.

And we find some of the disciples tainted with the same disease, being in the beginning moved on by a like itch of ambition and respect to earthly rewards. For we find them often asking our Saviour, 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel;' and reinstate that ancient polity in its former strength and splendour? And the apostles were frequently moving for some worldly profit and advancement; asking for themselves, what Zebedee's wife did for her children, 'that one might sit at his right hand, and another at his left in his kingdom. But our Saviour told her, 'she knew not what she asked; for his kingdom was not of this world.' He meddled not with earthly crowns and kingdoms, nor did he dispose of any wordly honours or dignities; all the advancement he designed for them was to a kingdom in heaven, not to any earthly crown or dignity. And though the princes of the Gentiles exercised dominion and authority over others; yet it should not be so among them, they were to be so far from affecting greatness and pre-eminence, that 'if any will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.' Matt. xx.

Yea, our Saviour was so far from flattering his disciples with any hopes of worldly wealth and greatness, that he told them of nothing but troubles and afflictions that would attend them in his service: 'In the world (said he) ye shall have tribulation;' but withal he bid them 'not to fear,' but to take comfort, 'for he had overcome the world,' and it should do them no harm. 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus (saith the apostle) shall suffer persecution;' but, to bear them up under it, our Saviour hath pronounced them 'blessed that are persecuted for righteous-

ness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Matt. v. 10. So that St. Peter's question, 'What shall we have therefore?' if it had an eye to any worldly power or preferment, was a great mistake in him, and proceeded from an ignorance of the nature of Christ's kingdom, and the main design of his coming; as will farther appear, by considering,—

2dly, Christ's answer to him and the other apostles, which is in the next words: 'Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Where, by following him in the regeneration, is meant their becoming his disciples, receiving his faith, embracing his doctrine, and their being born again by baptism to a new state and scene of things, which is called 'the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.' By 'the Son of Man's sitting on the throne of his glory,' is meant his return to his kingdom in heaven, from whence he came down to make and shew us our way thither; and when he is seated on his heavenly throne, he will shortly after seat his followers on 'twelve thrones,' alluding to the twelve apostles, who shall each of them have their throne of glory, in order to the 'judging of the twelve tribes of Israel;' each of them having their particular tribe to judge and condemn their infidelity in not believing in Christ, or at least to be assessors and approvers of the sentence that shall then be pronounced against them.

In short, then, the sense of our Saviour's answer is, that ye that have left all to follow me, shall be no losers by the bargain; but as soon as I come to my kingdom, ye shall be highly honoured and rewarded by me; and in the life to come, when all things shall be made new, and settled in an everlasting state, ye shall be made partakers of the glory of my kingdom, and raised to as high a degree of happiness as your natures are capable of receiving. By which answer he sought to take them off from all thoughts and expectations of any worldly greatness, his intention being to advance them, not here, but hereafter.

But I find a reverend and learned author referring these words of our Saviour, 'when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel,' to a state here in this life, and before the next world, to wit, after Christ's resurrection and ascension into heaven; when being advanced to God's right hand, he was said to sit in the throne of his glory; and his apostles sitting on twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel, was instating them in the same power of teaching and governing his church, which he exercised himself during his stay upon earth, whereby they ruled and instructed the several parts of it, as the rulers of the Jews did their several tribes. So St. Luke seems to expound it, chap. xxii. 28—30.

But however that be, the power our Saviour gave them after his departure, was wholly spiritual, and related only to the good order and discipline of the church, and so gave them no encouragement to expect any temporal greatness.

But our Saviour, who best knew, hath given us his own sense in this matter in the following words; 'And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life, &c. Where we have,

1. The duty of Christ's followers; and that is, to forsake lands, and houses, relations, and all earthly advantages 'for his sake;' that is, for his cause, and at his call.

2. The reward promised to so doing; 'He shall receive a hundredfold' in this world, and in the world to come life 'everlasting.'

3. The encouragement to come, though never so late, to follow him; 'for many that came first shall be last, and the last shall be first.' Of each of which briefly. And,

1. Of the duty of Christ's followers, which is, to 'forsake houses and lands, father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and all' the nearest and dearest relations 'for Christ's sake;' that is, not absolutely, or upon any worldly or trivial account, for these things are the necessaries and comforts of human life, and so not to be too easily parted with; but only for Christ's sake, for his cause, and at his command, when they stand in competition with, or in opposition to his will, then are they to be renounced and forsaken by us.' When we must either leave Christ or them, and cannot stick to both; when the loving of the one is the hating of the other, and the holding to one is the despising of the other, then we must not be at a loss what to do, or which to choose, but must readily and cheerfully leave all for Christ: for he himself hath said: 'He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me:' yea, he that is not willing to 'take up his cross' and to suffer death rather than leave me, is not qualified to be my disciple. St. Luke expresses it, by 'hating father and mother, and wife and children, brethren and sisters; yea, and his own life too,' if occasion require: which things, though they are to be loved above all earthly concerns, are yet to be hated and abandoned, when they come in competition with our Saviour. And he that prefers any thing before or above him, or is unwilling to part with it for his sake, is not fitted for his service, or to be a follower of him; especially considering, that he never calls for it but for very good reason, and for their own advantage: for 'he that findeth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for Christ's sake, shall find it:' for which see Matt. x. 37, &c. Luke xiv. 26, 27. This then is plainly the duty and interest of a true

disciple and follower of Christ. From whence I proceed to consider,

2. The reward that attends the so doing, which is partly in this life, but chiefly in the next. And to the question 'What shall we have therefore?' it is here answered, 'Ye shall receive a hundredfold' in this world, and in the world to come, 'life everlasting.'

The phrase of 'receiving a hundredfold,' is taken from the husbandman, whose labour in sowing is recompensed with a manifold increase. Some have been so nice as to observe, that a grain of corn sown shoots out at least into seven stalks or ears; and supposing each stalk or ear to have but ten corns in it, the increase of that will amount to seventy fold, the proportion mentioned elsewhere: but supposing fourteen or fifteen in each, as in many fruitful places and years it often happens, the increase will amount to a hundredfold or more; which being the proportion of the most fruitful countries, is here set down for the harvest of Christians, who have left all for Christ, even this life. The Psalmist tells us, that in the very 'keeping of God's commandments, there is great reward,' in the peace of conscience, the health of the body, and the increase of substance and a good name; so that a virtuous life hath, even in this world, if there were no other, much the advantage of a loose and dissolute conversation.

But in the world to come their reward will be infinitely greater, for there they 'shall inherit everlasting life;' where they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, which they shall enjoy not for a term of time or years, which will soon expire, but by a tenure of inheritance, which will last for ever.

And lest any should be discouraged from coming to Christ, by thinking it too late to follow him; it is added in the close, that 'many that be first shall be last, and the last shall be first:' meaning, that many that came early to our Saviour, and were first in the discipleship, if they hold not on, shall be postponed, and be the last and least too in the reward: and that others that came not so soon, and were the last in the number of his followers, may possibly outgo the former, and be advanced before and above them, and so become the first that will be rewarded by him. This is exemplified in the parable of the labourers in God's vineyard, mentioned in the next chapter, where they that came in at the last hour of the day, were, by their double diligence in their work, as highly rewarded as those that came in at the first, with this same saying, 'The last shall be first, and the first shall be last.' Chap. xx. 16.

An instance whereof we have in St. Paul, the saint of this day, who though last called, and therefore styled the least of the apostles, and one born out of due time, being called after our Lord's ascension into heaven, yet for coming behind none of the

apostles, but labouring more abundantly than they all, he was highly rewarded with a 'crown of righteousness, which God the righteous Judge had laid up for him; and not for him only, but for all that love and long for his appearance.' Another and greater instance hereof is that of the Gentiles, who though called long after the Jews, and receiving the gospel upon their refusal of it, were received into greater favour, and blessed with clearer revelations of God's will than they; and so the 'first became last, and the last first.'

Thus we see the sense of this day's gospel; from whence we may learn the great lesson of self-denial, to take up the cross, and follow our Saviour. Let us renounce the pomps and vanities of this sinful world, that we may be content to leave all and follow him; and with the many worthies that are gone before us, learn to adhere to him in times of greatest danger and difficulty. We see the reward we shall have, therefore, is great in this world, and will be much greater in the next. Wherefore let us imitate the diligence and fidelity of this great apostle St. Paul, by whose painful preaching the light of the gospel now shines throughout the world; and let us pray, as the Church directs us this day, that we having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto God for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught, through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all glory, praise, might, majesty and dominion, both now and for evermore, Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE, COMMONLY CALLED THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

MAL. iii. 1—6.—*Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts,* &c.

THE collect for this day puts us in mind of the only-begotten Son of God's being presented in the temple in the substance of our flesh; and thence teaches us to pray, that we may be presented unto God with pure and clean hearts, by the same Jesus Christ our Lord: which presentation of the Son being accompanied with the purification of the mother, and both for our sake, have been thought fit to be kept in remembrance, and to that end to be yearly commemorated in the public devotions of the Church.

Accordingly the epistle for this day speaks of it in the prophecy, and the gospel in the event or accomplishment of it: both

which are to be the subject of our meditation at this time. And,

I begin, as the epistle directs, with the prediction of it by the prophet Malachi, in these words: 'Behold I will send my messenger to prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.' Now this messenger was John the Baptist, who was sent as a harbinger before to prepare his way, by preaching of repentance, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; for this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.' Matt. iii. 3.

After this the Son of God, the desire of all nations, and the promised Messiah, suddenly came to his temple, being duly presented there according to the custom of the law, who likewise presented himself for the redemption of mankind.

There was a law from the beginning (as appears by Abel's offering the firstlings of his flock, Gen. iv. 4) for offering unto God, as the Creator and Proprietor of all things, the first-born of every creature, both of man and beast, to be consecrated to him as his; as we read, Exod. xiii. 2. 'And it is written in the law, that every male that openeth the womb, shall be called holy unto the Lord.' Luke ii. 23. To which God, by delivering the first-born of the Israelites, when he destroyed those of the Egyptians, laid a farther claim. After which the first-born of man, being a male, when he was a month old, was to be brought to the sanctuary or temple, and there presented and offered by the priest unto the Lord.

Accordingly the blessed Virgin, when her first-born was a month old, went up to Jerusalem to present him in the temple; where being come, and admitted into the inner court of the congregation, she delivered the holy child to the priest; who receiving him at her hands, most solemnly dedicated and presented him unto the Lord. By this ceremony the Son of God took possession of his Father's house; and at this time were the prophecies of Haggai and Malachi fulfilled, when he who was so long desired and sought for came to his temple, and was solemnly presented to God in it. By which dedication, the glory of this latter house became, according to the prophecy, far greater than the former. And though Herod rebuilt this temple for his own honour, yet God Almighty turned that to the glory of his Son, which he vainly intended for his own.

This is what God, by the prophet here, plainly foretold, and assured the world of, saying, 'Behold, the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in (that is, Christ the mediator and founder of the new covenant) he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

But because the ends and effects of his coming would be terrible to all impenitent sinners, the prophet asks the question,

'Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?' meaning, that his presence and preaching shall be accompanied with a powerful influence of a divine Spirit, and with those severe judgments that shall destroy all that withstand and rebel against him: 'For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver.' A refiner, you know, works in the fire, to purify gold and silver, and to separate them from the dross that is mingled with them. And the comparing our Saviour to a refiner, signifies the fiery trial, that all Christians must undergo to try the strength of their faith, and to separate the good from the bad: 'He shall come in flaming fire (saith the apostle) taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2 Thess. i. 8. 'He shall purify the sons of Levi,' refining both priests and people; who are styled, 'a chosen generation, and royal priesthood,' being both made priests unto God, to offer unto him spiritual sacrifices. Rev. i. 6, and Rom. xii. 1.

Again, he is likened here to fullers' soap, which fullers generally use in washing and whitening their wool, to represent unto us Christ's washing and cleansing his church, that he may present it pure, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Eph. v. 27. And all this, 'that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness:' which in this prophecy is called *mincha purum*, 'a pure offering.' Mal. i. 11. 'In every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.' Where by incense the ancients understood prayers and thanksgivings; according to that of David, 'My prayer shall ascend up like incense:' and by *mincha purum*, the 'pure offering,' was meant the sacrament of the Lord's supper; where the body and blood of Christ, offered for us upon the cross, are visibly represented to us by the symbols of bread and wine: by receiving of which we commemorate his sufferings for the remission of our sins.

And this is here called 'an offering in righteousness,' because it is our just and reasonable service that tends to promote holiness, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And it is called 'a pure offering,' because it is, or should be, purely and spiritually offered; and that, as some think, in opposition to the impure sacrifices under the law, where unclean beasts were sometimes offered. But others more probably think it so styled, from the purity of conscience and pure affection, with which it is to be offered. 'To the pure (saith the apostle) all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled.' Tit. i. 15, 16.

The Jews' offerings were profane and polluted, because they proceeded not from a true faith, or a conscience thoroughly

purged from dead works to serve the living God. But the christian sacrifice is a pure offering, being not tainted with hypocrisy, nor polluted through unbelief. Hence we are told, that sacrifices do not sanctify a man, but a pure conscience in him that offers sanctifies the sacrifice. And because the Church wills us to offer up our prayers and praises with simplicity, and a conscience purified from all malice and hypocrisy, the oblation is accounted by God for a pure sacrifice: and it behoves us to present our Maker with such oblations, wherein we best express our thankfulness to him, with pure minds and faith unfeigned, with steadfast hope and fervent love offering unto him the first-fruits of his creatures.

This is that offering in righteousness, or pure offering, which the Son of God, who was this day presented in the temple for our sakes, teaches us to make to our heavenly Father; to which therefore we are to take the more diligent heed.

Accordingly, our Church directs us, after the receiving the holy sacrament, wherein Christ presents himself and the merit of his sufferings to us, to present ourselves both soul and body unto him, as 'a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice unto him,' which is but 'our reasonable service:' then will this pure offering find a gracious acceptance, and our sacrifice come up with a sweet-smelling savour. So the prophet here tells us, 'Then shall the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.' Otherwise, incense will stink in his nostrils, and the best oblations prove an abomination to him.

Moreover, the prophet here foretels of this Son of God's coming again to his temple, to convince the world of sin, and to reprove all profaneness; for he brings him in saying in the next words, 'I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against' all unrighteousness: where he is represented both as a 'judge' to condemn, and 'a witness' to testify against several sorts of sinners: as, particularly,—

'Against the sorcerers,' who deal in witchcraft and diabolical enchantments: and

'Against the adulterers,' who violate the bonds of wedlock, and defile themselves with strange flesh: and

'Against false swearers,' who prostitute and pollute the name of God, and bring in his testimony to confirm their lies and impostures: and

'Against those that oppress the hireling in his wages,' that deprive the labourer of his hire, and make use of their neighbour's work without wages: and

'Against the oppressor of the widow and fatherless,' who are both left destitute of all assistance; the one from a husband, and the other from a father, and so must necessarily be in a forlorn and helpless condition; and to oppress them is a piece of barbarous impiety and injustice: and, lastly,

Against those 'that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts;' that is, such as, instead of receiving and entertaining strangers, reject and injure them, shewing neither fear of God nor regard of men; for whom God Almighty here gives his word, that they shall not go unpunished.

Thus we see both the manner and ends of the Son of God's coming to his temple, where he was solemnly presented to the Lord, according to the custom of the law, and the predictions of the prophets, together with the design and consequents of this presentation; of which we have a brief account in the epistle for this day. From whence we may learn the following useful lessons:—

1st, From Christ's coming to the temple, to fulfil the prophecies, let us come to it, to fulfil his precepts: so the Psalmist resolved, 'We will go into his tabernacle, and worship towards his holy temple.' And elsewhere, 'I was glad (saith he) when he said unto me, We will go into the house of the Lord; our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem!' This we find was the practice likewise of the holy apostles, who, as St. Luke tells us, 'were daily in the temple, blessing and praising God,' chap. xxiv. 53. This God requires and expects from us, that we should meet together in his house to praise him, and then he hath promised to meet us there to bless us, and to make us joyful in his house of prayer. Let us not, then, 'forsake the assembling ourselves together in God's house, as the manner of some is;' but let us exhort and call upon one another daily to resort to it, and the rather because the day of reckoning is approaching.

2dly, From Christ's being presented in the temple, and thereby honouring it with his presence, let us learn to honour and esteem it holy, by keeping it from all profanation: he having taken possession of his Father's house, and thereby dedicated and devoted it to his service, we may not desecrate or pollute it, by putting it to any other common uses. And therefore we read that at our Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem, he went into the temple, where he had been formerly presented, and finding his Father's house made a market, or place of merchandise, he was highly incensed at the profanation; insomuch that, as St. John tells us, he made a scourge himself, and with great indignation whipped the buyers and sellers out of it, saying, 'It is written, My Father's house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves;' thereby fulfilling that prophecy of him, 'The zeal of thy house hath even eaten me up.' It was God Almighty's own command, that we should 'hallow his Sabbath, and reverence his sanctuary.' Lev. xix. 30. And it is our Saviour's precept, that we should keep it holy, by setting it apart from vulgar uses, and consecrating it to divine service: and therefore we should take care decently to repair and beautify the temple, and after that diligently to repair and resort to it.

3dly, From Christ's coming, as a refiner's fire, to purify the sons of Levi, and as fuller's soap to wash and cleanse his church, we should learn all purity both in life and doctrine. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, (saith our Saviour,) for they shall see God.' Matt. v. And without purity and holiness no man shall see the Lord; for 'he that hath this hope (saith St. John) must purify himself, even as He is pure.' In heaven there is no defilement enters, nor can any unclean thing inhabit those pure and undefiled regions. Our Saviour's coming was to free us from the pollution as well as the power of sin, and thereby to fit and qualify us for the beatific vision; for otherwise we are neither prepared for that, nor that for us. And therefore having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Lastly, From Christ's coming to sit in judgment, and be a swift witness against several sorts of sinners, let us learn to prepare for his coming, and to prevent the doom by true repentance; turning from all sin unto God, and especially from those mentioned in the epistle for this day. As,—

(1.) From all sorcery and witchcraft, either by practising any magical arts, spells, or charms, or by seeking to witches or wizards for telling of fortunes, or finding of lost goods: these are reckoned among the works of the flesh and of the devil; and to have recourse to them is to seek more unto Satan than unto God.

(2.) From adultery and uncleanness; for 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,' and be a swift witness against all that break the covenant of marriage, and defile their neighbour's wife.

(3.) From perjury and false swearing, whereby the name of God is dishonoured, right is perverted, and great wrong and injury is committed.

(4.) From all sorts and degrees of oppression, particularly of the hireling, by detaining the wages of his work, and withholding the hire of the labourer; and especially of the widow and the fatherless, of whom God hath undertaken to be the patron and defender, and will certainly be the avenger of all that do them wrong.

Lastly, Let us turn from all oppression of strangers, and injuring of such as do fly to us for succour; for that will add unmercifulness to injustice, and will provoke God to punish us for both.

In a word, let us turn from all sin and wickedness, and then God will turn in much mercy towards us, and stand by us in the needful time of trouble; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

LUKE ii. 22—40. — *And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male, that openeth the womb, shall be called holy unto the Lord; and to offer a sacrifice,* &c.

THE two memorable things we are to call to mind this day, relating to our Saviour's incarnation, are his presentation in the temple, and the purification of his Virgin mother. Of the first, I treated the last time in the epistle for the day, which contains the prophecy of it: of the last, I am now to speak from the gospel for the day, which contains the accomplishment of that, and the purification of the mother; and begins in these words:—

'When the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;' where he was solemnly presented and dedicated unto the Lord, according to that law of his that required 'every male, that openeth the womb, to be called holy unto him.' Exod. xiii. 2.

This being accompanied with the purification of the mother, are both remembered by the Church at this time.

When the days of her purification, according to the law, were accomplished, she went into the temple, not only to present her Son, but to 'offer a sacrifice' for her own cleansing; for all women, after child-bearing, were to be held unclean, and so were to be separate from the congregation forty days after the birth of a male child, and eighty after a female; as we read in the twelfth chapter of Leviticus. And when they were expired, at their coming into their sanctuary, they were 'to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord;' that is, if they were rich, they were to bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt-offering, and a young pigeon, or turtle-dove, for a sin-offering; and if any, by reason of poverty, could not go to the expense of both, then two turtle-doves, or young pigeons, were accepted for a sufficient oblation: in compliance herewith, the blessed Virgin, being of a low and mean condition, and so purified *in forma pauperis*, brought her two turtle-doves, the one as an offering for her cleansing, the other as an holocaust of adoration and thanksgiving for her delivery; by which she punctually observed the law of purification, though the immaculate conception and birth of our Lord really needed no such ceremony.

By this we are taught obedience to all the lawful injunctions of the Church and country whereof we are members. Though there was no impurity in the birth of our Saviour, and the blessed Virgin contracted no pollution by bringing him forth; yet, being 'born under the law,' they submitted to it, 'to fulfil all righteousness;' and so observed the laws that were required of others upon the like occasion. Obedience to authority is a necessary duty, even when the rites it requires are no otherwise necessary than merely by being enjoined: so did the Son of God here, and so did his blessed mother; and so, by their example, ought we to do likewise.

But whilst they were both in the temple, offering and doing after the custom of the law, 'Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him;' meaning, that he was a holy, religious man, that earnestly looked and longed for the coming of the Messias; and, being endued with the spirit of prophecy, 'it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ;' that is, he should see the promised and long-expected Messias before he died. Whereupon he was led by the same Spirit into the temple, at that very time when the parents of the holy Child were performing the rites required in the law for him; which being done, he takes the holy Child into his arms, and blesses God, and then says his *Nunc dimittis:* 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' He only desired to live to have a sight of his Saviour; and having obtained his wish by this sight of him in the temple, he was willing to leave this world, to be received into a better. He was dead to the world, as to all other things before, and desired to have his life prolonged no farther than to have this much longed and prayed for happiness of seeing the Messias, and to behold the Author of man's redemption; and when that desire was fulfilled, he valued nothing more here, but begs leave to be gone: but yet he would not rashly throw away himself, or shorten his days before the time; he would not leave the world without the leave of Him that placed him in it; he was willing to 'depart,' but it was 'in peace' with God and man, that he might partake of that 'salvation, which the Son of God had prepared before the face of all people.' For this 'Lamb of God,' that was to make an atonement for the sins of mankind, is said to be 'slain before the foundation of the world;' that is, in God's decree and determination, it being agreed from all eternity between the Father and the Son, what should be the manner and measure of his sufferings, to render him an effectual and all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world; and that not of a selected company of the Jews only, but of the whole world of Gentiles also; for he was ordained 'to be a light to lighten the Gentiles,' as well as 'to be

the glory of his people Israel;' meaning, that he was to discover this salvation by the light of his gospel to those that sat in darkness, and the shadow of death, as well as to his own peculiar people, that sat under the light of his countenance.

But this sacred hymn being adopted into the holy offices of the Church, is more largely treated of in the evening prayer after the second lesson; to which therefore I shall refer the reader.

After this we read, that 'Joseph and the mother marvelled at those things that were spoken of him;' for though an angel had revealed to them the miraculous manner of his birth, which they found punctually fulfilled; yet they did not thoroughly know or understand the great things that should be spoken of, and done by him: and therefore when they saw and heard some of them, they could not but wonder, as well as rejoice at them.

And Simeon, when he had delivered the Holy Child back again to his mother, and blessed God for giving him the happy sight of him, blessed the parents also, as persons highly favoured of God, for their near relation to his Son; and after his giving the ghostly benediction to them, prophetically told the mother, that 'this child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against;' signifying to her the event of this great birth, that it would be a means of bringing great happiness to some, and an occasion of much misery to others. They that will take him for their Saviour, by believing on him, and receiving his doctrine, and accepting of the terms of salvation tendered by him, shall reap unspeakable benefit and advantage from him, both in grace here, and in glory hereafter. He is set for the rising and advancement of all such as yield to his sceptre, and will be governed by him; for they shall receive rest and comfort to their souls now, and after this life endless glory and felicity.

But they that are obdurate and impenitent, that will not believe, obey, or trust in him, but withstand his power and kingdom; all such will bring unspeakable misery and punishment upon themselves; and instead of being redeemed and saved by his coming, it will but sink them the deeper in the gulf of perdition, and aggravate their condemnation. He is set for the fall and utter ruin of such obstinate unbelievers, for he will bruise them with his rod of iron, that will not submit to the golden sceptre of his kingdom. The prophet Isaiah foretold, that 'he should be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to the house of Israel; a gin and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and many should stumble and fall, and be broken in pieces,' Isa. viii. 14, 15. Which prophecy is quoted and applied by St. Peter, 1 Epist. ii. 6, 7, 8, where we read, that 'to them that believe he is a precious and living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious;' and we 'too as lively stones are built up a spiritual house to him,' who 'is the chief

corner-stone,' to bind and support the building; and 'he that believeth in him shall not be confounded.' But to the 'disobedient and unbelieving he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,' at which they stumble and fall to their utter ruin, and by dashing against it are broken in pieces.

But this must be understood of the accidental issue and event, not the primary end and design of his coming; for this stone was not laid in Zion merely as a stumbling-block to trip up the heels of his followers, but many would unhappily take occasion of falling by it to their own destruction. Our Saviour was not born into the world only to be a gin to catch, or a snare to entrap mankind; for if so, it had been better he had never been born, and the angels publishing the glad tidings of the gospel, would prove rather a sad message of misery and destruction to the world.

This then can only be an accidental consequence or event, proceeding from men's perverseness and opposition, and occasioned by their own default, not the proper end and effect of his incarnation. If any be offended in Christ, and thereby hazard their own salvation, the offence is only taken, not given; and though this child is here said to be 'set for the fall as well as the rising again of many in Israel,' and for a sign that should be spoken against, yet that cannot be meant of any divine decree, that should order or necessitate it, for that would make God the author both of their sin and their destruction, which he frequently disclaims; but he therein only declares the unhappy effect of some men's obstinacy and unbelief, who would turn the most sovereign medicine into poison, and make that which was intended for the rising of all men, become to some an occasion of falling. Nor did God 'set up his Son for a sign to be spoken against,' but as an ensign to the people to come in and be saved by him; which nothing but their own infidelity and opposition can hinder.

These things good old Simeon here foretold concerning this holy child, namely, that he should be so far from being received or closed with by some, that he should be contradicted and spoken against by many, which happened to him during the whole course of his life; wherein not only his doctrine was opposed, but his person too reviled as an impostor, 'as a glutton, and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners;' but more especially at his death, when being lifted up on the cross, he was mocked, reproached, and blasphemed by the multitude, and loaded with all manner of calumnies and contradiction of sinners against himself; at which, Mary his mother being present, the same prophet foretold, that 'a sword should pierce through her own soul also,' that 'the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed; meaning, that their sharp calumnies and reproaches would enter her soul like a sword, and pierce her through with many sorrows, whereby the wickedness of men's hearts would be discovered.

Though some understand these words as a prophecy of the manner of her death, that she should die and perish by the sword, and her glory be among the martyrs; which Epiphanius and others take to be the fulfilling of this scripture, 'A sword shall pass through thine own soul also.'

About the same time that good old Simeon came into the temple to see the Messiah presented, and his mother purified there, that our faith in these great points might be established out of the mouth of two witnesses, and those of both sexes, a woman of great age, viz. Anna a prophetess, detained in this life, as Simeon was, for the beholding of the Lord Christ, came in at the same time, and seconded Simeon in the like relation concerning this child's being the promised Messias and Saviour of the world; in which the great strictness and severity of her life, and her sequestration of herself from common converse, much like John the Baptist, added much to her testimony. She is described by the evangelist here, to be 'the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser, to be of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity, to be a widow of fourscore and four years; that she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.' Not that she was never out of the temple, but that she never forsook it, but kept close to it at all set times of prayer. This devout widow and prophetess came into the temple at the same instant with Simeon, and was there equally transported with joy at the happy sight of this heavenly infant, blessing and praising God for the same; and after giving thanks unto the Lord, declared the same things of him with good old Simeon, that he was the long expected Messias, that brought salvation to Jew and Gentile; speaking of him not to them only that were present, but to 'all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.' And when all these things were performed according to the law, the parents returned with him into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth, where the 'child grew' in stature, 'and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.'

This is briefly the mercy we call to remembrance this day, which was anciently celebrated with solemn processions, the manner whereof was this: a great multitude of people being gathered together, they marched through the streets and highways two by two, with candles in their hands, consecrated and blessed by a bishop; from which usage, and the many candles set up in the church on this day, it was called Candelaria, or Candlemas.

With these lights they went on in their processions, to signify that 'their light should shine before men,' Matt. v. They that went out first, returned last, to signify their humility; 'In honour preferring one another,' Rom. xii. 10. They went on their way singing, to signify that 'God loveth a cheerful giver,' 2 Cor. ix. 7. And their song was, 'Great is the glory of the Lord,' to signify

their devout praises and thanksgivings to their Maker. And the procession itself taught them not to stand idle in the way of life, but to proceed forward in a course of virtue, and to be still going on to perfection. This account is given by St. Bernard of the manner and reasons of their processions on this day.

But what may we learn from this day's festival? Why,—

1. To bless God for the confirmation of our faith in the Holy Jesus, given us by these two witnesses, who were blessed with the sight of him; as also for the manifestation thereby made to us of the consolation of Israel. For though we cannot now see our Saviour with our bodily eyes, as they did, yet we may behold him with an eye of faith, as he is revealed to us in Holy Scripture, where our Saviour hath pronounced those 'blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.'

2. From the purification of the virgin mother, we may learn to purify ourselves both in body and soul, and to practise that holiness and purity, together with that obedience which our Saviour and the blessed virgin have taught us by their own example, and from them learn to be meek and lowly in heart.

Lastly, Let us learn from good old Simeon, never to think of dying in peace till we have embraced our Saviour with our understandings and affections, and heartily believe and practise what he hath revealed and taught us. Then will he shortly embrace us in the arms of his mercy, and bring us to the blessed vision of himself in the highest heavens: which God grant us for ever. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLX.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. MATTHIAS'S DAY.

ACTS i. 15, to the end.—*In those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, (the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty,) and said, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus, for he was numbered with us*, &c.

THE collect and epistle for this day acquaint us with two things.

First, A vacancy in the apostolate, by the untimely death of Judas, one of the twelve apostles. And,—

Secondly, The filling up that vacancy, by the election of St. Matthias, one of the seventy disciples; together with the manner and circumstances that attended both. For the

First, We read here, that St. Peter, the chief of the apostles, stood up in an assembly of the disciples and others, to the number of about an hundred and twenty, and said unto them, 'Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David, concerning Judas, who

was a guide to them that took Jesus.' The Scripture here referred to, that was to be accomplished, is that of David, Psal. xli. 9. 'Yea, even mine own familiar friend whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread, laid in great wait for me.' This was punctually fulfilled in Judas, whom our Saviour took into the number of the apostles, and trusted him with the power of the keys equally with the rest; and yet of him the Holy Ghost foresaw and foretold, that he would betray Jesus, and be a guide to others to take him; which he did by the signal of a kiss, and thereby delivered him up into the hands of his enemies; as we read, Matt. xxvi. 47, 48, &c.

Having thus betrayed and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver, his conscience smote him for so vile and perfidious an act; the sting and remorse whereof made him repent, and bring back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, casting them down in the temple, saying, 'I have sinned, in that I betrayed innocent blood.' Which money they thought not fit to put into the treasury, because it was the price of blood, and therefore, 'took counsel, and bought with it the potter's field to bury strangers in; wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day.' Matt. xxvii. 6, 7, 8. After the purchase of this field with the reward of iniquity, paid indeed by the chief priests and elders, but occasioned by the treachery of Judas; by which St. Matthew's account may be reconciled with St. Luke's: after this, I say, St. Matthew saith, he 'went out and 'hanged himself;' St. Luke here, that, 'falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and his bowels gushed out.' The word, in the original, signifies to be suffocated, choked, or strangled, and that may be either by a halter, hanging himself, as St. Matthew relates, or by a suffocating fit of sadness and melancholy, which might make him fall headlong, and by it to be so burst, as the bowels might gush out, as St. Luke here relates it. However that be, it is certain he came to a desperate and miserable end, and a place among the apostles thereby became void; to which St. Luke here applies that of the Psalmist, 'Let his habitation be desolate, and his bishoprick let another take.' Psal. lxix. 25, and Psal. cix. 8. This was the vacancy, together with the occasion and manner of it. From whence I proceed,

Secondly, From this vacancy in the number of the apostles, to the filling it up by the election of Matthias, one of the seventy disciples: to which one of the apostles, supposed to be St. Peter, prepared the way, by saying in the next words, 'Wherefore of these men, which have companied with us all the time that Jesus went in and out among us, beginning with the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.' The sense of which words is, that Judas being fallen from his office by his treachery to his master, it is necessary to choose one in his place,

to fill up the number of the twelve apostles; which number, it is thought, our Saviour made choice of, in allusion to the twelve patriarchs, or twelve heads of the tribes of Israel: and we are to supply his place by one that hath been with us ever since our Lord Jesus began to teach us, even from the time that John baptized him till his assumption up to heaven, to be taken into the apostleship, and to perform that which Judas should have done; namely, to preach the gospel, confirmed by Christ's resurrection from the dead, of which they were to be witnesses in all places where they were sent.

Accordingly in this election, 'two' persons thus qualified were nominated and set up for this purpose; to wit, 'Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.'

The manner of their election was not by suffrage, but by lot; a way much used in ancient times both by Jews and Gentiles, for the deciding of any doubtful and difficult matters, looking on it as a referring things to God Almighty, which could not otherwise be well determined: according to that of Solomon, 'The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing of it is from the Lord.' Prov. xvi. 33. This was wont to put an end to much strife, and many controversies: so the same wise man tells us, Prov. xviii. 18, 'The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty.'

Now the lots mentioned as used in holy Scripture, were always about things of great weight and consequence, and never about slight and trivial matters, that were not worthy of an appeal to God Almighty: and the cases therein mentioned, were,

1st, In the election of magistrates and judges, wherein the choice was by lot referred to God, to direct to whom he pleased. So Saul was chosen by lot to be king of Israel, which is therefore said to be from the Lord. 1 Sam. x. Not from the choice of the people, as some would have it, but by the direction of God.

2dly, Lots were used in the dividing of lands and inheritances. So we read that the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, and their several families by lot, whereby God assigned to every one their part and portion. Numb. xxxiii. 54. From which example, in the following times the decision of doubtful cases among heirs was wont to be referred and ended by lots.

3dly, Lots were used for the discovery of some secret wickedness, that was prejudicial to the public, and yet could not, for want of witnesses or other evidence, be otherwise found out. Thus Achan's sacrilege, in purloining the accursed or devoted thing, was discovered by lot, and he brought to condign punishment. Josh. vii. 16, &c. And thus Jonas's disobedience to God's command, which occasioned such a rough and violent storm, as endangered the lives of all that were in the ship, was found out by lot, Jonah i. 7; where we read, that the mariners, after their

calling each upon their God, said one to another, 'Come let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us;' which was an usual course among them in such cases: and they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonas.

These were the principal cases, wherein lots were anciently used; to which, as to a sacred thing, they applied themselves with great devotion and sanctity.

But in process of time, this usage was abused to bad purposes by spells, charms, and other sorts of sorcery and enchantment; in which they had recourse not so much to God, as to the devil. From hence proceeded the magical and diabolical arts of necromancy, chiromancy, judicial astrology, and the like; some pretending to foretel future events, to find out stolen goods, to tell fortunes, and the like: whereby they impose upon the credulity of the ignorant, using that 'cunning craftiness' mentioned by the apostle, by which 'they lie in wait to deceive.'

This hath occasioned that question, whether lots may be lawfully used by Christians or no? In answer to which, we must distinguish of three sorts of lots: as,

(1.) Of lots of consultation, wherein inquiry is made of somewhat that must be done, as the choice of magistrates, or the discovery of some doubtful matters, that cannot otherwise be decided.

(2.) Lots of division, whereby some things are to be divided among more; as in lands, goods, or any other thing; what belongs to each, or falls to their share.

(3.) Lots of divination, for the knowledge of future accidents, or telling of fortunes, and the like.

Of the two former sorts of lots there can be no doubt of the lawfulness of them, being allowed and justified by many examples in holy Scripture, wherein elections have been made, lands divided, and many doubtful cases decided by casting lots; some whereof were appointed, and others approved by God himself.

But for lots of divination, in telling of fortunes or things to come, these have been ever condemned by the laws of God and man; being corrupted by witchcraft, conjuring, and invocation of devils. Such was the folly and superstition of the heathens, who would tell future things, and determine the fate of persons, and the issue of actions, by the entrails of beasts, the flying of birds, by signs in the air, fire, and water, and many other ways of sorcery and enchantment; which being justly reckoned among the works of the devil, which we renounce in our baptism, are not to be allowed or countenanced among Christians.

But here some have started a farther question, about the lottery of cards and dice, whether that be lawful, or may be safely used by Christians? In answer to which, I say, that in that, as in other indifferent things, if we separate the right use from the abuse of them, there can be no just doubt of their lawfulness. Now the right use of them consists in passing away some spare

hours in such innocent and inoffensive diversions, in cherishing friendship and society among neighbours, in relaxing and recreating the mind sometimes from severer employments, which else would sink under the burden of worldly cares and troubles; and if we use them moderately and seasonably to these ends, without neglecting greater and weightier matters, there can be no fault or offence found in them. The abuse of them lies in spending too much of our time and substance in them, which may engender strife, swearing, and spilling of blood; in making a trade of them, and thereby making a by-work to become our main business, with the neglect of the proper work of our vocation: which things are attended with the loss of time, the decay of substance, and impoverishing of ourselves and families; which put a guilt and unlawfulness into them, and turn harmless recreations into heinous provocations. In short, if we sever the right use from the abuse of these things, we need not entertain any scruples about them. However, the apostle's advice in these matters is, 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,' for 'whatsoever is not of faith,' or with the full persuasion of mind, 'is sin;' and 'he that doth any thing doubtingly, is damned.' Rom. xiv. 'To him that thinketh any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean:' and to him that thinketh cards and dice to be evil, or cannot well govern his temper and passions in the use of them, to him they are evil; and he does wisely in abstaining from them: but to them that are better informed, and can more easily command themselves, to them they are innocent diversions, and may be safely and lawfully used by them.

I have insisted the longer upon this, to give some light and satisfaction to scrupulous persons in these matters.

But to return to Matthias, the saint of this day: he was, upon the fall of Judas from the apostleship, put upon the election with Joseph called Barsabas, to succeed in his place, and the choice was to be determined by lot: but before they entered upon it, they prayed unto God to direct the choice, saying, 'Thou, O Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by his transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.' Where the matter was referred to God Almighty's decision, and great reverence and religiousness was shewed in the action; for they poured out their prayers, before they gave forth their lots, and then by God Almighty's direction 'the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles:' and so succeeded in the room of Judas, who fell from the apostleship, 'that he might go to his own place:' which place is variously interpreted, some understanding it of Judas, that he went to his own place, that is, to hell, the place of eternal damnation, which, for his treachery to his Master, he justly deserved. Others understand it of Matthias, that he went to his own place, that is, to the place from whence Judas

fell; which then became his own, it being then assigned to him. Where this place or province assigned him was, is not recorded in holy Scripture, nor doth ecclesiastical history give us any clear account of it, or where he preached the gospel. Only we read, that he continued at Jerusalem, till the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, to enable them for the discharge of their office; and then he is thought to have spent the first-fruits of his ministry in Judea, with great success: from whence, it is supposed, he afterward travelled eastward towards the countries of Ethiopia. He was a zealous assertor of Christ's doctrine and miracles, and a successful propagator of the gospel in all places where he went, though he met sometimes with rude and barbarous people, that treated him with great inhumanity.

The time and manner of his death are variously reported, and little certainty is to be had of either.

Some relate him to have been seized by the Jews, and by them stoned as a blasphemer: others, that he was beheaded: others again, that he was crucified. However that be, it is generally agreed, that after many labours and great sufferings, by which he converted many to Christianity, he at last obtained the crown of martyrdom.

This is a brief account of the life and death of St. Matthias, as it is related in the epistle for this day and elsewhere. From whence we may learn a few remarkable lessons: as,

1. From Judas's betraying his Master, and thence falling into despair, and dispatching himself, we may learn, that there may be bad servants even in Christ's family, and of his own choosing; for Judas was immediately called by Christ himself, and equally empowered and commissioned to preach the gospel with the rest of the apostles, and converted as many as they, and yet was a vile and wicked person; to shew that the badness of a minister doth not null his commission, or make his office useless, and that the efficacy of God's ordinances depends not upon the quality of the persons that deliver them, but upon the appointment of God, and the blessing that attends, and is entailed upon them. Moreover, from the uneasiness and terrors of Judas's guilty conscience by reason of his sin, let us learn to keep our minds as much as possible free from all guilt, which else will make us restless, and rob us of all that quiet and repose, which the best condition in this life can afford us; and likewise constantly to attend upon God's ordinances, though he who is called to administer them, be not always one of the best of men.

2. From God's appointing or allowing of lots in the election of Matthias to the apostleship, we may learn, that lots are not only lawful, but sometimes sacred things, and may be safely applied to sacred uses; it being a referring of things to the disposal and determination of God Almighty, which cannot by ordinary means be well decided. Only care must be taken, that we use them not in slight and trivial matters, that are not fit to be

referred to so great a judge; as also that they be not accompanied with charms and enchantments, that refer them more to the devil than to God.

3. From the apostles' praying to God, to direct their choice to the fittest person to succeed in that holy office, we may learn, that all who seek for holy orders should seriously examine themselves, whether they are moved herein by the Holy Ghost, and of their own fitness to enter into so high and holy calling. And likewise that the governors of the Church should beg God Almighty's guidance and direction in so great an affair, that they may wisely make choice of fit labourers to work in God's vineyard: and all good Christians are to join in such prayers, in which the welfare of their souls are so much concerned. To this our Church hath directed, in the prayers to be used in the Ember-weeks before ordination.

In a word, we are taught to pray this day, that by the example of the apostles in the election of Matthias, the Church may be always preserved from false apostles, and be ever ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors. In doing whereof, we shall make a right use of the observation of this festival; which God grant for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. MATTHIAS'S DAY.

MATTHEW xi. 25, to the end.—*At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father,* &c.

THESE words were pitched upon for the gospel for this day, perhaps because Matthias was a person of mean birth and obscure parentage, and was instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and made choice of for an apostle; when persons of greater birth and parts had not the knowledge of those divine truths, nor were admitted to so high and sacred a function.

In the verses foregoing, our Saviour 'upbraided the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not,' nor believed on them; denouncing many woes against the rich cities of Corazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, for despising his doctrine and miracles, when poorer persons and places gladly received and embraced him; which made him break out into this affectionate expression of thanks unto God, saying, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes;' meaning, that the mysteries of the

gospel, which the wise and great men of the world despised, being given up to their own wilful blindness, were made known to the humble and meek, being illuminated by the light of God's Holy Spirit; and that God had so disposed the way to heaven, that more of the meaner than higher sort walk in it, and what the proud and the learned wilfully rejected, was readily received by the more ignorant and unlearned world. This St. Paul likewise observed and acknowledged, 1 Cor. i. 27: 'Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things to confound the things that are mighty; yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.'

And this is here ascribed not to any merit in the persons or things themselves, but only to the favour and good pleasure of God: 'Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.' Where his own good-will is made the sole motive of his distinguishing mercy, and that it is an act of his free undeserved grace and goodness to some, and of his just displeasure and desertion of others. We may not, therefore, challenge any thing by way of desert, nor arrogate any knowledge or privilege we have above others to ourselves or our own merits, but merely to the favour and good-will of God. So St. Paul ascribes his 'making known to us the mystery of his will, wholly unto his good pleasure,' Eph. i. 9; for it is 'he that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure,' Phil. ii. 13. If, then, God hath revealed more of the mysteries of the gospel and the method of salvation to us, than to greater persons, let us not be lifted up, or think ourselves better than they; but let us be humble under it, thankful for it, and make a right use of it, otherwise it will aggravate and increase our condemnation.

This our Saviour here farther illustrates and confirms in the next words, saying, 'All things are delivered unto me by my Father;' meaning, that all power is given unto him for the instructing, ruling, and saving of mankind, and no man can have any knowledge of him or his Father without him; for 'no man (saith he) knoweth the Son, but the Father;' that is, none can comprehend the mysteries of his person, or of his mind and will, but the Father, who is one with him; neither can any know or comprehend the mind of the Father, but the Son who lay in his bosom: the secret transactions between them concerning man's salvation being known only to themselves, and 'to such to whomsoever the Son shall reveal them.' The manner and measure of which revelations are guided only by the Divine will and pleasure; from whence he infers those comfortable words in the following verses, saying,—

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,

for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Where we have,—

First, A gracious invitation made by our Saviour: 'Come unto me.'

Secondly, The persons invited; and they are, 'All ye that labour and are heavy laden.'

Thirdly, A promise of ease and benefit; 'And I will give you rest.'

Fourthly, The way and manner of coming unto Christ; and that is, by 'taking his yoke upon them, and learning of him,' especially the great lessons of 'meekness and lowliness of heart.'

Fifthly, A farther encouragement hereunto, from an inward sense and feeling of the promised rest; 'Ye shall find rest unto your souls.'

Lastly, A good reason to back and enforce it; 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' Of each of these briefly and particularly. And,—

First, Of the gracious invitation made by our blessed Saviour, in those words, 'Come unto me.' Where, by coming unto Christ, is meant, the coming unto him by faith, or believing in him; receiving him as a Saviour, and relying upon his merits and atonement for salvation. Hence coming to Christ, and believing, are in Scripture used to signify one and the same thing: 'He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' Heb. xi. 6. 'All that the Father giveth me (saith our Saviour) shall come unto me;' that is, shall believe in me: 'and he that thus cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.' It is sometimes expressed by receiving of him: 'As many as received him, (saith St. John,) to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name.' John i. 12.

The first step in our coming to Christ is by baptism: 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' saith Christ; that is, to be baptized, to take my name upon them, and to be received into my family.

The next step is by prayer, which is often expressed by coming unto God: 'He is the God that heareth prayers, (saith the Psalmist,) and therefore to him shall all flesh come,' for the supply of their wants, and to find grace to help in time of need.

Again, A farther step in coming to God is by repentance and confession of sin; which is frequently called a coming or turning to him. Sin is a departing from God, and in every transgression we go astray and revolt from him; and it is by repentance we return and come back to him, from whom we have erred and strayed like lost sheep.

Moreover, We are said to come to God by hearing his word, and receiving instructions from him: 'You will not come to me,

(saith our Saviour to the Jews,) that ye may have life;' *i. e.* you will not receive my doctrine, nor come to hear the words of eternal life, by which alone you can be saved. They that turn the deaf ear to God's word, say in effect with those in Job, 'Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' But they that come to be taught by him, say with Samuel, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'

Furthermore, We are said to come to Christ by receiving his holy supper; for so the words of invitation are, 'Come, for all things are now ready.' To encourage us to come, he styles himself 'the bread of life;' and tells us, that 'he that cometh to him shall never hunger, and he that drinketh of this cup shall never thirst: for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed;' and both of them are able to nourish and cherish our souls to eternal life.

Lastly, We are to come to Christ by putting our whole trust and affiance in him, relying upon him for salvation, and placing all our hopes and confidence in his merits and satisfaction.

All this is implied in this invitation, 'Come unto me;' which, we see, is to believe in him, not with an idle, speculative, or ineffectual faith, which rests in the brain, and goes no farther; but with an active, operative faith, that sinks into the heart, and works by love, in embracing and closing with him. This is the invitation.

But, Secondly, Who are the persons invited? Why, that the next words will tell us; they are the weary and heavy laden: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;' that is, ye that labour under the sense of your sins, and are heavy laden with the weight of your iniquities. Sin is, indeed, a very great and heavy burden, yea, the worst and most intolerable of all burdens; it is a weight that lies heavy upon the soul, and presses it sore. So David complained of it, Psalm xxxviii. 4, 'Mine iniquities are gone over my head, they are become a burden too heavy for me to bear.' And afterward, he was 'troubled and bowed down greatly' under the weight of them; which made him roar for the very disquietness of his heart, often saying, 'Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me?'

But the heaviness of the burden of sin can in nothing be better seen, than in that unsupportable load of misery and trouble it brought upon our Saviour; for when he took this burden upon him, it made his body sweat great drops of blood, and his soul exceeding sorrowful unto death; yea, it sank the one into the grave, and the other into hell. And if every thing that presseth down be heavy, how heavy is that which presseth down to hell! A pressure, sure, which none but the Son of God was able to bear.

Now, sin hath a double weight in it, viz. a weight of guilt, and a weight of filth; the one consists in the punishment due

to it, and the other in the pollution or defilement that sticks to it.

Punishment is that gross weight of sin, that is soonest felt, and hardest to be endured or removed, being accompanied with the fears of Divine vengeance, and the terrors of a guilty mind. This made Cain to complain that his punishment was greater than he could bear; and Judas, from the intolerable anguish and despair of a guilty conscience, went forth and hanged himself.

As for the filth and pollution of sin, though it lays a heavy load upon the soul, it is not so tenderly felt as the guilt of it; but yet is not therefore the less, but rather the more dangerous: for, as physicians observe, those are most dangerously sick, that have the least sense or feeling of their sickness; whereas to be sensible of pain, is a sign that the disease is not deadly. So in spiritual maladies, the evil is so much the greater, by how much it is thought the lesser. And therefore David reckoned the loathsomeness of sin to be a great part of the load and burden of it: 'My wounds (saith he) stink and are corrupt through my foolishness.' And the prophet Isaiah describes the sinner, 'from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, to have no soundness in him, nothing but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores;' which made the Psalmist pray as much to be purged from the foulness, as to be pardoned of the heinousness of his sins; as we read, Psalm li. 2, 7, and Psalm xxxviii.; Isa. i. 6. Hence the same prophet speaks of sinners, as 'a seed of evil-doers, laden with iniquity,' ver. 4. And St. Paul, speaking of some 'silly' seduced women, affirms them to be 'laden with sin, and led away with divers lusts.' 2 Tim. iii. 6. If sin, then, be so heavy, how comes it to pass that many make so light of it? Why, this proceeds partly from inconsideration, or not weighing matters aright; partly from the temptations and suggestions of our ghostly enemies, who hide from men the sight of the greatest evils; and partly from the deceitfulness of sin, which hardens their hearts, and makes them insensible of the heaviest load that can lay upon them.

But who are they who are here said to 'labour and be heavy laden?' Why, they are such as feel the weight of their sins, and earnestly desire to be rid of it. He that finds any great burden pressing hard upon him, will labour and groan under it, and be very willing to have it removed. In like manner, he that is sensible of the great load of guilt and shame that attends his iniquities, that feels the loathsomeness as well as the heinousness of them, will gladly be rid of both: and these are the persons that our Saviour here calls upon to come to him; not such as are hardened in their impieties, and feel no remorse for them, but such as are grieved and wearied with the burden of their sins, and long to have it taken from them: 'Come unto me, all ye that thus labour and are heavy laden.' And to encourage them to come, here is,—

Thirdly, A promise of ease and rest, 'And I will give you rest.' Rest and peace, or quietness of mind, is one of the greatest blessings we can attain on this side of heaven; for it gives us a freedom from molestation and trouble, and likewise such an ease, satisfaction, and tranquillity of mind, as is an earnest or foretaste of the felicity of heaven. This none but God can give us; the world can give us trouble and tribulation, and sin evermore raises a storm in the breast that harbours it; but it is God only that can still this tempest, and bring calmness and serenity into the soul: 'I create the fruit of the lips, peace,' saith God Almighty, Isa. lvii. 19, and this he here promises to all that come to him, 'I will give you rest.'

Fourthly, But how are we to come to Christ to obtain this blessing? Why, that the next words will tell; 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Where by taking his yoke upon us, is meant the obeying of his precepts; and by learning of him, is meant the following of his example, especially in the virtues of meekness and humility.

1. I say, to come to Christ, is to take the yoke of his precepts upon us, by doing his will, and keeping his commandments. This is called a yoke, not for the heaviness or burdensomeness of it, to gall the necks of his followers; for St. John declares, that 'his commandments are not grievous:' but in allusion to the ceremonial law of Moses, which, consisting in many cumbersome rites and sacrifices, is by St. Peter styled a 'yoke,' which 'neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear.' This yoke he is so far from willing us to take upon us, that he hath taken it off from us, having 'blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and nailed it to his cross.' But his yoke is only that of the moral law, which contains the dictates of natural light, and is agreeable to the best reason and interest of mankind: and of that too he hath taken away the rigour and the curse, and laid on us only the gentle yoke of faith and repentance. From this we are not to draw our necks out of the collar, but willingly and readily to take it upon us, not thinking that Christ hath done all for us, and left us nothing to do; but we must do our part, and 'work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.' And as we are to come to him by taking the yoke of obedience upon us; so are we,

2. To learn of him the great lessons of meekness and humility: 'Learn of me (saith he) for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Of these virtues Christ was the highest pattern, and hath given us the lowest instances; for though he was the Son of God, yet he became a servant to men: 'I am among you (saith he) as one that serveth.' And the apostle wills, that 'the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, humbled himself to the likeness of men, and took upon him the form of a servant.' Phil. ii. 5, 6. Meekness and lowliness of heart are the chief parts of that yoke that Christ would have us

learn of him to put on, they being two such dispositions of mind, as render it pliable and fit to receive and wear the yoke of Christ. Now though meekness and lowliness in Scripture often signify the same thing, yet some have distinguished them into two virtues: lowliness signifying our humble duty and devotion towards God, and meekness our becoming and condescending service and carriage towards men; the one including the duties of the first table, and the other of the second. Others again, by meekness, understand the humility of the soul, and by lowliness the humility of the body; and by both such a tameness and tractableness of spirit, as dispose men to put their neck into the collar, and to take the yoke upon them.

Fifthly, This is what we are here bid, from Christ's example, to learn and labour for, with a farther encouragement, of 'finding rest to our souls.' We had before a promise of Christ's 'giving us rest,' and we have here a promise of our 'finding' and feeling of it. By coming unto Christ, he will give ease and rest; and by taking his yoke upon us, we shall find and feel ourselves eased: for Christ first wore this yoke himself for our sakes, to make it the more portable and possible for us to wear it; the main weight still resting upon his shoulders, that we may experiment the truth of his promise, and find ease and rest unto our souls. And this will lead to the

Last and great motive here urged to come to Christ, and take his yoke upon us, from the lightness and gentleness of it; 'For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.' This will be found by experience by all that will try and venture upon them: for Christ's precepts are infinitely just and righteous, highly agreeable to the nature, reason, and true interest of mankind: our obedience to them is a holy, acceptable, and reasonable service, and the contrary practice utterly repugnant and destructive of all these: which may abundantly satisfy us of the 'easiness of Christ's yoke, and the lightness of his burden.' Which will further appear,

If we compare it either with the worship of the heathens, which consisted in many barbarous and bloody sacrifices; or with the law of Moses, which was attended with a heavy and burdensome yoke of rites and ceremonies, that were laid on the necks of the Jews, and is by Christ taken off from ours; or, lastly, with the contrary course of a loose and sinful life, which is attended with the vilest drudgeries that can be put upon the greatest vassals: whereas Christ's service is perfect freedom, 'his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Great peace have they that keep thy law (saith the psalmist) and nothing shall offend them.' So that well might St. John say, that 'God's commandments are not grievous;' and our Saviour, that his 'yoke is easy, and his burden not only light,' but delightsome.

Let none then draw back from coming to Christ, upon the account of any uneasiness in his service; or decline the ways of

religion, upon any pretended difficulties in them: but rather let us all resolve to come speedily, cheerfully, and thoroughly unto him; and then we shall find rest to our souls here, and everlasting peace and rest hereafter: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

ISA. vii. 10—16. — *Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above: but Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David,* &c.

THE great business of this day's festival, is to celebrate the annunciation of the blessed Virgin Mary; by which is meant, the declaration made to her by an angel, of her being the mother of the promised Messias, together with the glory, greatness, and everlasting duration of his kingdom. Which things are this day commemorated, both in the prophecy of them in the Old Testament, and in the accomplishment of them in the New: the former is contained in the epistle, the latter in the gospel for this day.

Of the first of these at this time, from these words of the prophet Isaias, 'The Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign,' &c. In which, and the following words, we have a prophecy of the birth of the Messias, of his virgin-mother, together with his name, and some other circumstances that attended his person; all which were mystically represented, perhaps in the person of another, born much in the like manner. Now this Ahaz here spoken of and spoken to, was one of the kings of Judah, the Son of Jotham, and the father of Hezekiah, two good kings, though he himself was a bad one; for 'he did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord his God, like David his father, but walked in the way of the kings of Israel; yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abomination of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel: and he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.' 2 Kings xvi. 2, 3, 4.

When Rezin king Syria, and others, came up against Jerusalem, and besieged Ahaz; he, to gain help from the king of Assyria, make a sacrilegious present to him of the 'silver and gold, that was in the house of the Lord:' which thing, instead of procuring a blessing, proved a curse to him; as we read at large, 2 Chron. xxviii. Now Ahaz, it seems, was a man of little faith, and would not believe what the prophets had told him concerning the birth of a child, without a sign to confirm the truth of it; like

those in the gospel, of whom our Saviour speaks, 'Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe:' and therefore the 'Lord spake to Ahaz, and said, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it either in the depth, or in the height above:' that is, either in the earth below, or in the heavens above, which were the only places where signs were wont to be given, the better to remove his doubts, and to satisfy him of the truth of what was told him.

To which he replied, 'I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord:' which answer proceeded not from any modesty or reverence he had for God, though he covered it with a pretence of not tempting the Lord his God, which could not be, in doing what he bid him; but from hypocrisy and dissimulation, wherewith he covered his unbelief and contempt of God's promises, to which he gave no credence, nor desired any satisfaction. But God Almighty, offended with his falsehood and distrust, said unto him by the prophet Isaiah, 'Hear ye now, O house of David! is it a small thing to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?'

The preface, 'Hear ye now,' with which the prophet ushers in his saying, signifies it to be a matter of great importance, and fit to be hearkened to. And because Ahaz was of the lineage and family of David, he calls upon the house of David to hear and receive his message, which was to upbraid their ingratitude and infidelity in the person of Ahaz: for though God had bestowed many mercies and blessings on his servant David, and made many and great promises to his seed; yet Ahaz, who was descended from that stock, and whom God had made king over his people, was utterly regardless and unmindful of the favours shewed to him, and made no returns suitable to the grace and mercy vouchsafed unto him.

The terms in which the prophet upbraided him were these, 'Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?' Ahaz had wearied men with his tyrannies and oppressions, and laden his people with heavy burdens and hard dealings: and the prophet asks the question, whether it were not enough thus to grieve and weary his subjects, but must he try and tire out the patience of God too, by repeated refusals of the offers of his mercy? Was it too light a matter thus to trouble and afflict men, but must you go higher, and so evilly intreat your Maker? Of this God himself complains, Isa. xliii. 24, 'Ye have made me to serve with your sins, and have wearied me with your iniquities.'

But as there God Almighty shewed the freeness of his grace, in pardoning their sins, and overlooking their iniquities, saying, in the next words, 'I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins,' ver. 25; so here, though Ahaz was not sensible of his lack of a Redeemer, and lightly esteemed the promises made to that purpose; yet I

will awaken him with a sign, and raise his thoughts to that great salvation, stored up for his people in the Messiah.

'Therefore the Lord himself (saith the prophet) shall give you a sign;' that is, seeing Ahaz would not ask a sign when God bid him, the Lord will give one of his own proper motion, for the comfort and confirmation of his people: and this sign is in the following words, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' The child here mentioned and promised, is by some thought to be literally meant of a child to be born in an unusual manner, as a sign or token of some temporal deliverance at that time waited for and expected; and this child is mentioned ver. 16, and in the following chapter. But the prophet here considers and applies it, in a mystical sense, to the birth of the Messias, and so it is expounded and referred to in the New Testament: in which sense it is a prophecy of the glad tiding of the gospel, or a message of the happiest news that ever sounded in the ears of the sons of men, to wit, of the birth and incarnation of our blessed Saviour. The manner whereof was here foretold by the prophet, many hundred years before it came to pass: 'Behold, (saith he,) a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' &c.; which, being the annunciation of the message we remember this day, must be here spoken to.

It begins with that note of attention and admiration, 'Behold!' which, like John the Baptist, ushered in the glad tidings of a Saviour; and, being never prefixed but to matters of extraordinary consequence, serves to prepare the world for his reception.

The prophecy or message consists of three parts or branches; namely, the conception and birth of the Messias, together with the name by which he was to be called: of which I must say something here in the prophecy, and more after in the accomplishment. And,—

1st, Of his conception, 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive.' That the Son of God, who was begotten of the Father before all worlds, should in time be conceived in the womb, cannot but seem strange and unaccountable; and that he should be conceived too in the womb of a virgin, cannot but add much to the wonder, and stand in need of a sign to make it credible: however, seeing he that is truth itself, and to whom nothing is impossible, hath revealed it to us, we have a firm foundation for our faith, and abundant reason to believe it; especially since, in the gospel for this day, we find this prophecy of it actually fulfilled in the Virgin Mary, as we shall see after.

2dly, This prophecy foretells the birth as well as the conception of the Messias, and both of a pure virgin: 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' That a virgin, continuing such, should conceive, is strange and miraculous; but that she should bring forth too, is more wonderful: and yet both are here prophetically and punctually foretold. Yea, this same prophet,

in chap. ix. ver. 6, 7, speaks so plainly of his birth, as of a thing actually performed in his days, though it came not to pass a long time after, saying, 'Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders; of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever.' That this is meant of the Messias, not only the concurrent testimony of expositors, but the lofty titles given to him, and the great things spoken of him plainly manifest, being both such as cannot agree with or be applied to any other. And though the prophet seems to relate a history of him, as of one born in his time; yet that it was only a prophecy of something future, is plain from what is added in the close, 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this;' meaning, that God's faithfulness to his promises would surely bring this thing to pass; which they therefore as firmly believed, as if they had lived to see him actually born. The first promise of him declared, that he was to be 'the seed of the woman,' Gen. iii. 15; and the prophecy in the text, that he was to be the offspring of a virgin, and her too to proceed from the seed of Abraham, and the lineage of David: of which things the gospel for the day will shew us the accomplishment.

3dly, This prophecy foretells the name of this promised Messias, and that is, Immanuel: 'A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel;' which is an Hebrew name, interpreted by St. Matthew to be 'God with us.' And this we shall find afterward fulfilled in his assuming our nature; for by taking our flesh into so near an union with the Godhead, he might be properly said to be 'God with us;' which name was afterward turned into that of Jesus, as we read, Matt. i. 21.

Indeed, many and great are the names and titles given to this sacred Person in holy Scripture: in the prophecy of Jacob, Gen. xlix., he is called by the name of Shiloh; which signifies 'one sent,' because he was to be sent for the redemption of mankind.

In this prophecy of Isaias, we read in the ninth chapter, ver. 6, 7, that 'his name shall be called Wonderful;' not only for the wonders of his conception and nativity, but for the many wonderful works that were to be done by him.

In the same place, he is called 'the Counsellor;' partly for his being privy to all his Father's counsels, as lying in his bosom; and partly for his revealing to us the whole counsel and will of God, to direct us in the ways of grace here, and of glory hereafter.

Again, he is styled 'the mighty God;' having all might and power originally in himself, and giving it in what measures and proportions he pleaseth unto others.

Moreover, he is in the same prophecy styled 'The everlasting Father,' or, as some translations render it, 'The Father of the age to come;' that is, the Father of all that believe, and the Author of that salvation which shall be revealed in the latter age. And,—

Lastly, He is there called, 'The Prince of peace;' not only for that general peace that was throughout the world at the time of his coming into it, but because he is the great Peace-maker between God and man, or the Ambassador sent from heaven, to treat and conclude a peace between heaven and earth, and make a firm league of amity and reconciliation with our Maker: and therefore the angels immediately upon his birth proclaimed 'Peace on earth,' at the coming of this Prince of peace into the world. These were the principal names or titles given by that prophet to this great Person.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold, that his name should be called 'The Lord our Righteousness,' Jer. xxiii. 6: of which name St. Paul hath given both the reason and the accomplishment, because 'he is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' 1 Cor. i. 30. He was to 'fulfil all righteousness' in his own person, and to clothe us with the robes of his righteousness for our justification, and so might be called 'the Lord our Righteousness.'

The prophet Haggai styles him 'The desire of all nations,' chap. ii. 7; which was fulfilled in that longing desire and expectation the world was in of him, both before and at the time of his coming, when it was in every one's mouth, 'Where is he that should come?'

The prophet Malachi styles him 'The Messenger of the Lord of hosts,' or 'the Messenger of the Covenant, whom they delighted in;' with a promise, that he should come and bring with him the best message that was ever sent to mankind. Mal. iv. 1.

In short, he is both by Moses and Malachi, the first and the last of the prophets, styled, that great Prophet that was to come into the world, to reform, to instruct, and to save it: 'A Prophet will the Lord your God raise up like unto me, (saith Moses,) and to him shall ye hearken,' Deut. xviii. 15: and, ver. 18, God himself gives them the same promise, saying, 'I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all the words that I shall command him.' And in the New Testament we find the people often saying of our Saviour, upon the sight of his miracles, 'Of a truth this is that great Prophet that was to come into the world.' Thus we see the ancient prophecies, relating to the incarnation of the Son of God, or what the prophets of old declared concerning the conception and nativity of the Messiah, the glad tidings of this day, together with the names and titles given to him in the Old Testament.

We see it was revealed to the prophets, that he should be born of a woman, and, by taking our nature and flesh, he might become one of us, to make an atonement for our sins; and that the same nature that had offended, might make satisfaction to Divine justice: as also that the same sex, which unhappily occasioned our fall, and the miseries that attended it, might in some measure contribute to our rise and restoration. For Eve was first beguiled by the serpent, and then Adam was beguiled by Eve; so that the woman being first in the transgression, that brought death and ruin on mankind, it was most fit that she should not be the last or the least in the reparation.

Again, the prophets foresaw and foretold, that as the Messias was to be born of a woman, so was he to proceed from one that was a pure virgin, to preserve all purity both in his conception and birth; and most fit it was, that since he vouchsafed to be born, he should be fashioned in a womb that was unpolluted; for if the disciples thought it expedient, that his 'dead body should be laid in a tomb or sepulchre, where never man was laid before;' as we read, John xix. 41, how much more decent was it that his living body should be conceived in a womb, where no man else had lain!

Moreover, the prophets foretold the greatness of his person and character, that the 'government should be upon his shoulders, and that his name should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; that of the increase of his government there should be no end, but it should be established for ever.' Isa. ix. 6, 7.

These prophecies of the Old Testament touching the Messias, couched in the epistle for this day, received their punctual accomplishment under the New; of which we have an account in the following gospel next to be treated of: in the mean time, from the foregoing discourse we may learn,—

1. To magnify and meditate upon the great goodness of God, in revealing a Saviour to the patriarchs and prophets so long before his coming, to the end that they might believe in and be saved by a Messias to come, and we the better receive and be confirmed in him when he came. He was revealed to Adam quickly after the fall, in those words, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' Gen. iii.; meaning, that one born of a woman should destroy the power of the devil that first beguiled them. After that he was revealed to Abraham: 'In thy seed (saith he) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;' that is, by the birth of one descended from his stock: and Abraham is said to have 'seen this day of his Saviour, and to be glad.' He was revealed to Moses by the name of a great Prophet, to be raised up to instruct and redeem his people: but Moses had a veil over his face, his revelations were obscure, and clouded under types and shadows; and generally, under the Old Testament, they 'saw through the glass'

of prophecy but 'darkly,' whereas we 'see him as it were face to face.'

2. From the Son of God's vouchsafing to be born of a woman, we may learn the lessons of humility and condescension to one another: 'Learn of me, (saith Christ,) for I am meek and lowly in heart.' Indeed, none was ever so high, and yet none ever made himself so low for our sake; which may teach us, if we are his disciples, to stoop and condescend to one another.

Lastly, From the Messias being born of a pure virgin, we may learn all purity both of life and doctrine, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God; for none but the pure in heart shall see God. And that we may have this hope, let us purify ourselves, even as he is pure: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

LUKE i. 26—38.—*And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women*, &c.

THE mercy we commemorate this day is the happy news of the conception and birth of a Saviour, which we are to consider both in the prophecies of it in the Old Testament, and the fulfilling of it in the New; the former is contained in the epistle, the latter in the gospel for this day.

Of the famous prophecy of it in Isaiah, contained in the epistle for the day, viz. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,' that is, by interpretation, 'God with us;' I spake the last time. Of the fulfilling of it, contained in the gospel for this day, I am now to treat: in which we are to observe,—

First, The message or glad tidings of this great birth.

Secondly, The messenger that brought this happy news.

Thirdly, The charge that was given thereupon, together with the manner and many circumstances that attended each.

First, For the message; that was the happy tidings of the birth of the Messias, who was then earnestly expected; for the date of the prophecies of him being then expired, and the time fixed for his appearance being then come, the question in every one's mouth was, 'Where is he that should be born?' and,

'Where is he that should come?' They were at it at every turn, as we read, Matt. ii. and Luke ii.

But whilst the world was thus intent, and even upon the rack of expectation, behold a messenger was dispatched from heaven, to let them know when, and where, and of whom this Saviour should be born, of which we have an account in this gospel.

1. It begins with the time of the delivery of this message, which was 'in the sixth month,' that is, after Elizabeth's conception of 'John the Baptist,' as we read, ver. 36; which conception of John was a token or forerunner of that of Jesus, as the one was after the harbinger of the other.

2. The place where this message was delivered was Nazareth, a poor contemptible city in Galilee, despised for its meanness; a place far remote from the royal city and temple, from the noble tribe of Judah, and the lineage of David, from whom the Messias was expected; and beside all this, a place of extraordinary darkness and ignorance, where the people were said to 'sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death,' Matt. iv. 15, 16. And yet this remote ignoble region was made choice of for the habitation and education of the Son of God, and Lord of all the earth; which was done to subdue all boasting of the nobleness of our city or country, and likewise to shew the efficacy of God's grace and power, in making the greatest light to abound in places of the greatest obscurity and darkness: for God delights to manifest his power in man's weakness, to make light to spring out of darkness, and to exalt humility above all the pride and vanity of the world.

3. The person that brought this news was an angel, one of the blessed spirits of heaven; 'The angel Gabriel was sent from God,' &c. And from this divine messenger we may learn the excellence and dignity, the difficulty and seeming incredibility, together with the undoubted truth and certainty of the message.

Secondly, The messenger that brought this news bespeaks the exceeding great dignity and importance of the message; for God Almighty never employs any of that high and eminent rank of creatures upon mean and ordinary errands. Wherever we read of his sending an angel to deliver his mind to the world, it is always about matters of very great weight and moment; as might be shewed in the messages brought by angels to Abraham, Lot, Moses, and others in the Old Testament, and such was that brought by the angel Gabriel on this day; a message fit only for the tongue of an angel to relate, and above the head of any mortal to comprehend.

Again, The seeming difficulty and incredibility of the message, require the embassy of an angel to deliver it; for had any mortal man related it, he might perhaps have raised wonder, but never have gained belief. The miracles of the incarnation were so great and astonishing, that none would have given credit to them from any inferior relation; that a virgin, remaining such, should

be a mother, and the mother of her Lord too; that, beyond all example, she should conceive the Son of God, and be the parent of her Saviour; that he, who inhabited eternity, should inhabit our mortal flesh; and though the heaven of heavens was not sufficient to contain him, yet should be contained in the narrow limits of a virgin's womb: these are miracles that seem to crack our faculties to conceive them, and would much more puzzle the faith of mankind to believe them, if they had not been supported by so divine a revelation. Nicodemus wondered how it was possible for a man to be born again when he was old, or to enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born; but how much greater wonder is it, that he should be born, who was far older than all time, and thus find a passage into the world, who had a being long before the world had any? that eternity should begin to be, and the Ancient of Days become an infant of a span long? These are matters which flesh and blood could never reveal, nor scarce receive when revealed; and therefore a celestial messenger was employed to bring the tidings of them: in a word, one of the heavenly host, that attend the throne of God, was thought fittest to deliver these great truths, which else would have appeared too big for human understanding or belief; whereas an angel's bringing them from God, may fully assure us of their undoubted truth and certainty; so that we may well receive them upon so high and heavenly authority, and safely build the hopes of salvation upon the truth of them.

But to whom was the angel Gabriel sent with this message? Why that, we are here told, was to 'a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary;' to let her know that she was that blessed woman that was chosen and singled out of all her sex to be the mother of the Son of God. The angel brought not this news to any great or noble personage, eminent for her high extraction or quality; nor was this extraordinary embassy dispatched to any queen or princess, that the Messias should descend from her; no, but the virgin that was to be Christ's mother, was Mary, a poor mean daughter of Israel, 'a lowly handmaiden,' as she styles herself, lowly in her mind, and low in her estate and condition; which made one, on this occasion to cry out, Lord, how thou despisest those things which, in the opinion of the world, seem great and honourable! How thou delightest to humble the pride of the world, and to dignify and exalt the most excellent grace of humility, in passing by the queens and empresses of the earth, and vouchsafing to be born of one of a mean parentage and low condition; which made her say in the *Magnificat*, that 'he putteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble and meek.'

Of this astonishing news the angel Gabriel gives her solemn notice, ver. 31. But before he delivers his message, from the great honour our Saviour was about to do her, he addresses to

her in this affectionate salutation, 'Hail! thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women;' which words may be understood, either as a declaration of the high honour and privileges of the blessed Virgin, or as a form of salutation, to congratulate her upon the news of her wonderful conception, and wishing her all joy and happiness thereupon; in both which senses she appears to be a great favourite of heaven, who blessed the earth with a Saviour, for whom all generations shall call her blessed.

'Hail! thou art highly honoured,' saith the angel; that is, highly honoured, say some; highly accepted or beloved, say others; highly ennobled and exalted, say all: and so indeed she was, upon the account of our blessed Lord's incarnation, and likewise upon the account of those excellent graces and virtues, with which she was in an eminent manner dignified and endowed.

1. She was highly favoured upon the account of our blessed Lord's incarnation. When the Son of God vouchsafed to come down from heaven, to be born into the world, and to be clothed with our nature, the Virgin Mary was that blessed woman in whom this mystery of the incarnation was to be transacted; so the angel told her, saying, 'Thou hast found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus: and how singularly gracious must she be unto God, and dignified above all her sex, who was to carry divinity in her womb, and to be the mother of God! Moses indeed had the honour of 'talking with God, as a man talketh with his friend;' but that is nothing to the bearing of God within her, and bringing him forth into the world. We read also of some who 'have put on Christ,' and others, who 'have Christ formed in them,' Gal. iii. 17, and chap. iv. 19, but both these are meant only in a spiritual sense; whereas the blessed Virgin was the person alone of all the world, in whom the 'fulness of the Godhead resided bodily.' She alone was designed to that high honour to which no other creature ever arrived, viz. to have a God to be her son, to partake of her substance, to be nourished with her milk, to hang on her breasts, and to be carried in her arms; Lord, what shall we say? She is herein inexpressibly above saints or angels. God cannot, saith a father, create a greater creature than such a virgin-mother; he can indeed make more and greater worlds, but to make a greater mother than the mother of God, is perfectly impossible.

2. She was highly favoured upon the account of the many excellent graces and virtues that were given to, and shined in her; not that she was perfectly free from all sin, original and actual, as some would have her; we dare not go so far: but she was endowed and adorned with many singular graces, which shewed that 'the Lord was with her, and that she was blessed among and above women.' The history of the annunciation gives us an account of some of her eminent graces, as,—

(1.) Of her unspotted chastity; she was a 'virgin that knew not man,' ver. 34, and so was free from all carnal uncleanness and pollution; both her mind and body were entirely pure and immaculate, not sullied by any fleshly or sensual lusts, but filled with the Holy Ghost, and so a fit temple for the God of all purity to inhabit.

Again, (2.) Her modesty and humility were signal and remarkable; which virtues were expressed by her carriage toward the angel; for 'when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be,' ver. 29. 'She was troubled at his saying;' poor virgin! saith one, descanting on those words, the angel's salutation was in all its circumstances too big for her modesty. The address, as she thought, was every way unsuitable to a woman of her low rank and condition in the world. For an angel, clad in robes of glory, to come and visit such a poor mean daughter of Israel, as she was; how can it be that heaven should find any thing in her above all other women, that might incline God thus to favour and honour her? She blushes at the angel's address, and sees and hears herself highly magnified, she knows not why. She thinks and ruminates upon the message, considers it again and again; and after all cannot apprehend any thing in herself, that might answer so high a character.

Such was her great modesty and humility, that she could not conceive the meaning of the angel's salutation, nor think herself worthy or capable of the great things mentioned in it. But the angel, to confirm her in the belief of what was told her, bids her, in the next words, 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God;' the lowliness of thy mind and condition is so far from an hinderance to thy advancement, that they have raised thee the higher in the esteem of Heaven. 'And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus; he shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end;' meaning, that he whom she bare, should have a spiritual kingdom settled upon him, of which the temporal kingdom of David was but a figure or faint representation; for he should have the absolute government of the Church, and reign in the hearts of his people for ever.

But still the holy maid, not fathoming the depth of this mystery, modestly asks the angel, 'How this could be without the knowledge of a man?' or how she, being a virgin, should conceive? To which the angel replied, that she should conceive this child not by man, but by God himself; for 'the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the Most High should overshadow her; therefore also that Holy Thing which should be born of her, should be called the Son of God.' Amazing news! and such as was able to puzzle the faith of any mortal! And

therefore the angel, to confirm his speech and her faith, gave her a sign in her cousin Elizabeth, saying in the next words, 'Behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren;' meaning, that she who was a long time noted for barrenness, and then too much over-aged for children, was now six months gone of such a supernatural conception; adding withal, that 'with God nothing is impossible.' He who had sent her the message, was abundantly able to perform it, how strange or difficult soever it might appear to her. Whereupon she submitted her reason to faith, and humbly acquiesced in the truth of what the angel had told her, without any farther doubt or contradiction; 'Behold,' saith she, freely resigning up herself to the divine pleasure, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord! be it unto me according to thy word.' She no longer 'staggered at the word of God through unbelief,' but like Abraham 'was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that what he had promised he was able also to perform.' And so she rested assured, that what she had heard must and would be, though she knew not how: and being thus satisfied in the message, 'the angel departed from her.' After which, she found all that was told her, in due time punctually fulfilled to her, and accomplished in her to a tittle.

This is briefly the history of the annunciation, which is fraught with so many miracles of mercy, as may well swallow us up with astonishment and admiration. The use that I shall make of this discourse, shall be,

1. To call upon us to give God the glory of his wisdom, power, and goodness in this great transaction. Let us admire his infinite wisdom in contriving this way of salvation for us, by sending his Son to take our nature, to satisfy for our sins; a method which no wit of man or angel could ever invent.

Next, Let us adore his infinite power in effecting that, which no human power or policy could ever bring to pass. And,

Lastly, Let us magnify his transcendent mercy and goodness, in revealing and conferring that favour and felicity upon us, which we of ourselves could never compass or obtain.

2. From the Virgin Mary's being dignified above all other women to be the mother of God, we may learn to give her the highest degrees of civil honour and respect, which are justly due to her upon that account; that is, to think and speak honourably of her upon all occasions, and never to mention her name without the title of 'blessed.' It was her own prediction, 'From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' It was begun by an angel, who saluted her with that high compellation, 'Blessed art thou among women.' It was followed by her cousin Elizabeth, who cried with a loud voice, 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb;' v. 42. And

the Church hath ever since honoured her with the titles of the 'blessed' and 'ever-blessed' virgin. And indeed we cannot shew too great a regard and reverence to this mother of our Saviour, so long as we give her not that worship that is due to our Lord himself. And therefore care must be taken, that as we come not short of all due respect to her, so that we do not exceed, by falling into any extravagant addresses or adorations of her: but let us retain the language of antiquity; 'Let the mother be honoured, and the Son worshipped.'

Lastly, Let us preserve the memory of the incarnation, and celebrate the good news of this day with joy and rejoicing. Abraham saw this day afar off, and was glad; he rejoiced in a promised Messiah: how much more should we be glad at a God manifest in the flesh? singing praises to God the Father, and receiving the Son with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

DISCOURSE CCLXIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. MARK'S DAY.

EPH. iv. 7—17.—*Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*, &c.

THE saint we remember this day, is St. Mark, an evangelist, and one of the penmen of the holy gospel.

He was supposed to be born of Jewish parents, and to be descended of the tribe of Levi, or the line of the priesthood. He is thought to have been converted by St. Peter, to whom he was a disciple and attendant ever after. He accompanied him in his progress through all the parts of Italy, and preached the gospel at Rome, where he is said to have composed and wrote his gospel. I shall not trouble you with the various fancies and conjectures that some have raised and entertained about him, as being neither certain nor material.

Good authority informs us, that he was sent by St. Peter into Egypt to plant Christianity in those parts; which he did with good success, converting multitudes both of men and women. He took up his chief residence at Alexandria, where he presided as chief governor of that Church and the places thereabout, till after a barbarous manner he suffered martyrdom.

The collect for this day minds us of God's 'instructing his holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of his evangelist St. Mark;' thence praying him to 'give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of his holy gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

The epistle for the day acquaints us,

First, With God's giving several gifts unto men, for the instructing of his church; together with the time, manner, and measure of his bestowing them.

Secondly, The several ranks and degrees of persons, on whom these gifts are bestowed. And,

Thirdly, The great ends for which they are given, together with the right use we are to make of them. These things comprise the substance of this day's epistle, and must be particularly considered.

And I begin, as the epistle doth, with the several gifts and graces given to us for the instructing and edifying the church of Christ, in these words: 'Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.' Our blessed Saviour, like the householder in the parable, being to go into a far country, hath committed sundry goods and talents to his stewards and servants, willing them to be diligent and faithful in their improvement, as those that must give an account at his return, and be rewarded accordingly. And these are given to every one, though not in the same kind or measure, but severally and in divers degrees, as he in his wisdom shall think fit to dispense. 'To one is given (saith the apostle) the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit, to another faith, to another the gift of healing by the same Spirit, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another divers kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.' And this last is probably thought to be St. Mark's talent, who was as an amanuensis or interpreter of St. Peter's discourses; which being delivered in divers languages, were by St. Mark expounded either by word or writing to those who understood not the languages in which he spake.

For the time of Christ's bestowing these gifts, it was, as the next words declare, at the time of his ascension up into heaven, like the householder's going into a far country. So the Psalmist foretold long before, saying in Psal. lxviii. 18, 'When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive and gave gifts for men.' At which time, like a king new crowned, he went up triumphing over all his enemies, leading sin, Satan, death and hell captive, who had before held others in captivity; and at the same time scattering many gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost in great variety among the sons of men.

'Now he that thus ascended up' to heaven in triumph, was the same 'that descended first into the lower parts of the earth.' By which is meant, either his descent into the Virgin's womb, there to take human flesh, which is by the Psalmist styled 'his being fashioned beneath in the earth;' Psal. cxxxix. 14; or his descent into the grave, called sometimes 'the bowels of the earth;' or else his descent into hell, signified by 'the lower parts of the earth.' Psal. lxiii. 9. And 'he that descended thus low, was the same also that ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill

all things:' that is the Son of God, who thus humbled himself to come from heaven to earth, merely to serve and save us, returned back again to send down the Holy Ghost, to scatter his gifts and graces among us for the planting and propagating his Church. And this was done partly for his own, and partly for our sake; for his exaltation was a reward for his former abasement, and his leaving us awhile was for our greater good, to give us his Holy Spirit to instruct, sanctify, and comfort us: for 'if I go not away (saith he) the Holy Ghost will not come; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.' Accordingly, soon upon his departure he endowed his disciples with power from on high, and gave gifts to men; for the Holy Ghost came down upon them 'in a mighty rushing wind,' as a token of inspiration, and sat upon their heads in the form of 'fire,' to inflame them with zeal and pious ardours; and in the shape of 'cloven tongues,' to signify the diversity of languages with which they were endowed, in order to the teaching of all nations, and declaring to them in their several tongues the wonderful things of God. Acts ii.

This for the time of 'giving this grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,' which was at his ascending up into heaven, from whence he showered down his gifts and graces in plentiful effusions upon his followers.

But, Secondly, who were the persons to whom these gifts were given? Why, they were chiefly the apostles and disciples of Christ, who were to plant and propagate the gospel, and to do all things necessary for the instructing and well-governing the Church. So the next words tell us, 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' Where we have the several ranks, orders, and degrees of ministers appointed by Christ in his Church, to whom he gave these gifts for the better discharge of their particular offices.

(1.) 'He gave some apostles;' or, as it is in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii. 28, 'He set some in the Church, first apostles;' first, not only in order of time, they being first chosen, but first in respect of power and jurisdiction; they being appointed to preside over the other disciples, to 'set in order the things that are wanting, and to ordain elders in every city,' as we read, Tit. i. 5. Indeed, an apostle, in the general notion, signifies no more than a common messenger, or one sent upon any ordinary errand; but here it signifies some particular commissioners sent by Christ, with the same power of ordering and ruling the Church that he himself had from the Father, of which we read, John xx. 21. For though Christ, during his abode upon earth, governed the Church himself, and the apostles then were but his substitutes and followers, yet after his departure, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, they were instated in the supreme authority of the Church, and had power to substitute others under them for the good government of it. And these were

succeeded by bishops, who are still the rulers and overseers of the flock of Christ, with the same power of sending and constituting others in like manner to the world's end.

(2.) 'He gave some prophets.' These, beside the power of instructing, were endowed with the gift of foretelling things to come, called in Scripture, the gift of prophecy. Such were the prophets of the Old Testament, who delivered messages from God, and foretold future events; and we read of some in the New Testament that did the same, as in Acts xi. 27, 28. 'In those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch, and there stood up one of them, named Agabus, who signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.' And of this gift of prophecy we read in 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

(3.) 'He gave some evangelists.' This title is sometimes given to those that wrote the life and actions of our Saviour, and published the glad tidings of the gospel. Such were the four evangelists, of whom St. Mark the saint of this day was one; whose gospel in writing is still extant and read with us.

But the notion of an evangelist here is distinct from that of an apostle, being placed after him, and signifying an attendant or substitute of an apostle, one that was sent by him to preach the gospel in places that had not yet received it, and where the apostle could not well go. These are in Scripture called evangelists: thus St. Mark, being sent by St. Peter into Egypt to publish the gospel, and to plant churches there, is styled an evangelist. So Philip the deacon, being employed by the twelve to preach in Samaria, is called 'Philip the evangelist,' Acts viii. 5, 12. And so was Stephen, for being sent to the Jews, Acts vi. 9: and Timothy, sent by St. Paul to Ephesus, is bid to 'do the work of an evangelist,' 2 Tim. iv. 5. And these were sometimes invested with apostolical power of ordaining and confirming, to supply the place of the apostle, when hindered by distance of place, sickness, or any other impediment, from doing it himself.

(4.) 'He gave some pastors and teachers.' These were such as were appointed to teach and instruct those who had already received the gospel, to feed the flock of Christ with sound doctrine, and to go before them by a pious example, to baptize converts, to catechize the youth, and to expound the Scriptures in places where they were appointed; which are the standing offices of the ministers of Christ to this day.

These were the persons to whom these several gifts and graces of the Spirit were given, with the several ranks and degrees of them.

But, Thirdly, What was the end of these gifts, and of endowing these several orders of men with them? Why, that the following words will tell us: it was 'for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying

of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith,' &c. Where the

1st end assigned of these gifts was, 'for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry;' that is, for the fitting and qualifying of Christ's ministers for the able and faithful discharge of the duties of their office; 'that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works,' as the same apostle tells us, 2 Tim. iii. Where the authorized teachers or preachers of the gospel are styled sometimes by the name of 'saints,' or 'holy men,' and sometimes 'holy men of God;' the providing and endowing of whom with parts needful for the work to which they are called, is the chief design of all these spiritual gifts; to enable them to 'speak as the oracles of God,' with boldness, pureness, and fidelity, that they may 'exhort and rebuke with all authority,' and diligently instruct and watch for the souls committed to their charge, as those that must give account for them.

2dly, Another end of God's giving these gifts, is for the good of his church and people, 'for the edifying of the body of Christ.' The Church is considered sometimes as a spiritual temple, where all the parts of it are built up in their holy faith, and so make a holy temple unto the Lord. At other times it is considered as a mystical body, where all the members are edified in knowledge and joined together in love, and so make up one sacred and mystical body, whereof Christ is the head.

Now, as God inspired gifts into Bazaliel and Aholiab, and others, for the building the material temple under the law; so doth he still furnish his ministers with gifts for the edifying a spiritual temple under the gospel. And as the members of the natural body are joined by nerves and ligaments to one another, so the members of Christ's mystical body are brought to be united together in the bond of one fellowship and communion; which is the best means of strengthening and edifying the body of Christ.

And this is to be done, 'till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.' Some understand these words of the time of the Jews and Gentiles coming all into one christian church, and their joining in the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God; the church thereby attaining to its full age, and as it were arriving to the stature of a perfect man, and to the measure of the fulness of Christ, that it can attain to in this life. But others, and perhaps more probably, understand the words of that perfection of faith and knowledge we shall arrive to in the world to come, when we shall be perfectly united to Christ our head in a full fruition of his presence and glorious Godhead; which is but begun here in this imperfect state, and will be completed hereafter, when we come to a state of perfection in life everlasting. And this is to

the body of the Church as its ripe and full age, in comparison to its childhood and non-age here in this world; according to that of the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10, &c., 'Here we know but in part, and prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, and thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.'

These are the ends of these spiritual gifts of prophecy, tongues, and knowledge, which will be useful to us in the ministry of the Church, and continue so to the end of the world; after which, they will be abolished and vanish away, as we are told, 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

And this will lead me, in the last place, to consider the use of these gifts bestowed for the benefit of the Church: and that is,—

1. To preserve the members of it from all giddiness and instability in religion, and to secure them from false doctrines, 'that henceforth they be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' Such is the weakness and inconstancy of many men, that like children they are carried from one doctrine to another, as a wave of the sea is driven with every wind that blows, sometimes this way, and sometimes another; and that by the sleight of men, or subtilty of false teachers, who by good words and fair speeches lead them into any new and strange doctrines: and more are deceived by the sleight of the tongue, than by sleight of hand. The word in the original is κυβεία, which is the cogging of a die, and signifies the cheating the people by putting false doctrines, as cunning gamesters do by putting false dice upon them; called therefore 'their cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;' that is, their setting off their false doctrines with those artificial colours and methods of persuasion, as are most apt to seduce the unthinking vulgar. Now, God gave these spiritual gifts to keep us sound in the faith, that we may not be led away with the error of the wicked.

2. Another use of these gifts, which results from the former, is to preserve us stable and steadfast in the truth; so the next words intimate, that 'speaking the truth in love, we may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;' meaning, that by keeping firm and steadfast to the truth as it is in Jesus, we shall thrive in all christian graces, and grow up into him in all things, as the members grow in proportion to the head. 'From whom (saith the apostle in the last words) the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the

edifying of itself in love.' Where the apostle alludes to the frame and contexture of the natural body, and the manner of its growth in each part; which is by a fit conjunction of all the members, and the communication of spirits from the head to each member; for being thus knit together by nerves and sinews, and compacted by the supply of every joint, according to the efficacy and proportion of the measure given to every part, so is the increase of strength and vigour to the whole. Even so it is in the mystical body of Christ's Church, where all the members being fastened together in one faith, united in the same fellowship and communion, and held together in one bond of peace and love, receive spiritual life, strength, and vigour from Christ the head, according to the measure and proportion requisite for every member; whereby they grow in grace, and edify themselves in love.

Thus we see the drift and design of the epistle for this day, which is to direct us to make a right use of all spiritual gifts; and that is, by applying them to 'the instruction of the Church,' according to the excellent pattern of 'the evangelist' St. Mark; by whose example we are taught to pray this day for 'grace, that we may not like children be carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, but may be established in the truth of the holy gospel;' which, among the other evangelists, was written and transmitted down to us by the saint of this day, and therefore to be received as the oracles of God, and the dictates of his Holy Spirit. All Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, and particularly the holy gospel, are given by inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness; that both minister and people may be kept 'sound in the faith, and thoroughly furnished to every good word and work:' which God grant, for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. MARK'S DAY.

JOHN xv. 1—12.—*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman: every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now are ye clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*, &c.

IN the close of the epistle for this day, St. Paul told the Ephesians, and in them all Christians, that by adhering to the truth, and living in it, we live in Christ, and 'grow up into him in all things,' who is the head of the christian Church; which he after illustrated by the similitude of the natural body, wherein as all the members are supplied with spirits, strength, and vigour from the head; so in the mystical body of Christ, all the members

receive spiritual life, growth, and nourishment from Christ the head of his Church.

This is farther illustrated in the gospel for this day, by the resemblance of the vine and branches: it is our Saviour's own comparison, which begins with these words of the gospel: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.'

By 'the vine' here we are to understand the Church of Christ, which is sometimes called and compared to a field, where the seed of God's word is wont to be sown; sometimes to a vine or vineyard, for the excellency of it above other fields, for the continual need it hath of being watched and dressed, and for the value and usefulness of its fruit, which 'cheereth the heart of God and man.' This resemblance of the Church frequently occurs in holy Scripture: 'My well-beloved (saith God) hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; he fenced it, and gathered out the stones of it; he planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein.' Isa. v. 1, 2. Which sets forth the great care that God takes of his Church, asking, ver. 4, 'What could have been done more to his vineyard, which he hath not done in it?' The prophet Jeremy calls it 'a noble vine planted with right seed,' chap. ii. 21.

By the 'true vine' here is meant the true Church, in opposition to the synagogue of Satan, and the conventicles of heretics and schismatics, where the tares and weeds of errors and heresies are sown, and spring up to choke the word, and corrupt sound doctrine.

By Christ's saying, 'I am the true vine,' is meant his being the head of the truly christian and catholic Church, wherever planted or scattered throughout the world; that the Church is his body, animated by his Spirit, propagated by his power, and preserved by his providence; and so is the author and establisher of his Church in the world.

But, because a vine cannot flourish or prosper without the care and labour of a husbandman, therefore our Saviour adds, that his Father is the husbandman: 'I am the true vine, (saith he,) and my Father is the husbandman.' He plants, and prunes, and dresses his Son's vineyard; that is, he sows the good seed of sound doctrine in it by his ministers, he fences it by a holy discipline, waters it with the dew of his heavenly blessing, and then gives it all its increase; so that he is 'the Householder' mentioned by the four evangelists, who 'planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a wine-press, and built a tower in it, and let it out to other husbandmen, and went into a far country.' Matt. xxi. 33, and Mark xii. 1. In short, God the Father, who hath by his Son planted a Church here below, hath the whole ordering of all things belonging to it; he manages and manures it by his ministers, and takes care of every branch and believer in it, and hath a due regard to every member of this mystical body.

Thus having shewed the author, rise, and original of the christian Church, we are next to consider the several parts and members of it, represented here by the several branches of this vine; in which we are to consider both the barrenness and the fruitfulness of them, with the different fate or fortune assigned to each. And,—

First, For the barren branches, we are told, in the next verse, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away;' meaning, that all barren branches are cut off from the stock, and all unprofitable members of Christ's body the Church, are lopped off and taken away by excision or excommunication. St. Paul speaks of 'some branches' of the Jewish stock, that 'were broken off for their unbelief,' and likewise of some of the Gentile branches that were 'engrafted' in their room, partaking of the juice of the 'root, and the fatness of the olive-tree,' and yet were rejected for their infidelity and unfruitfulness under the means of grace; Rom. xi. 17, 20. Which should caution us against being barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ; 'for if God spared not the natural branches,' that is, his own people, the Jews, 'take heed lest he also spare not thee.' But,—

Secondly, For the fruitful branches, we are told, in the following words, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit;' he pruneth it, and useth all means to make it the more fruitful; which may teach us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and to adorn our profession with good works: for if these things be in us, they will make that we shall not be barren or unfruitful, but abounding in fruits of righteousness, which will redound to the praise and glory of God, and to promote our own salvation.

And this he would have us to do, because we are in some measure pruned and purified already by the doctrine of Christ, and the operation of his Holy Spirit; 'Now ye are clean, (saith he,) through the word which I have spoken unto you,' and may continue so, and increase more and more, 'if ye hear my words, and keep them.' 'Abide therefore in me,' (saith he,) that is, in my Church, and be my disciples; and then I will 'abide in you' by my Holy Spirit, and that will sanctify and cleanse you, that will comfort you in distress, and direct you in all your ways, and make you fruitful in every good word and work. My presence is absolutely necessary to your fructification; for 'as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine,' and receive sap and nourishment from thence; 'no more can ye, except ye abide in me,' and derive grace and spiritual strength from me. From whence he infers what he had before asserted, and was still proving, to wit, 'I am the vine, and ye are the branches;' I am the stock or tree into which ye are ingrafted, and ye are the limbs or branches that spring or sprout out from it; 'He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.' He that continues a true member of my Church, and is by a

lively faith united to me, and I to him; he, by the grace communicated by me to him, will be fruitful in all good works: but if ye be severed or cut off from me, and the influences of my grace and Holy Spirit be stopped from coming to you, there can no good fruit come from you; 'for without me (saith he) ye can do nothing.' So even the best of men have found and acknowledged; 'I can do nothing of myself, (saith St. Paul,) but I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me.' We are 'not sufficient of ourselves' to think a good thought, and much less to do any good action; 'all our sufficiency is of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' His power is seen in our weakness, and his grace, if derived upon us, will be at all times, and in all cases, sufficient for us; provided still that we keep firm and steady to his Church, and partake of his holy ordinances, which are the channels to convey spiritual life and strength to us.

But 'if a man abide not in me,' or in my Church, (as he goes on,) he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' A branch, you know, cut off from the vine, presently withers and dies away, and is fit for nothing but the fire; even so he that falls off from Christ, or is by the just judgment of the Father broken off from him, is soon deprived of God's grace; and then, like a tree destitute of all sap or juice, quickly withers, and is fit only to be cast away and burned; becoming like the barren fig-tree cursed by our Saviour, saying, 'Let never fruit grow on thee any more,' but cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? and cast it into the fire. Which shews us the extreme danger of excision, and of the dreadful sentence of excommunication, whereby men are cut off from the body of Christ's Church, and without repentance and returning to it, become only fuel for the flames of divine vengeance.

Let us therefore persevere and abide in this vine, which God's own right hand hath planted; and then we shall be supplied with grace and strength to bring forth much fruit, if we take care to continue united to Christ in his Church, that he may not be provoked to withdraw his Spirit and blessing from us.

These things our Saviour here often repeats and inculcates again and again, that we may give the more diligent heed to them, and that they may leave the more deep and lasting impressions upon us; that we may know the great advantages of adhering to him, and the great danger of deserting and withdrawing from him. In a word, he presses these things with the greater earnestness, to make us sensible of our dependence upon him for life and grace, and all things, and where our recourse must be for them, as also upon what conditions we may be emboldened to ask them, with any comfortable hopes or assurance of receiving them; to which end, he tells us, for our encouragement, in the

Next words, that 'if ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you;' meaning, that as long as we continue in Christ's Church, and persist in our obedience to him and his doctrine, so long all the prayers we put up to him shall be heard and answered.

This is a vast and invaluable privilege, to have the ear of the Almighty always open to our prayers, and to have our requests ever ready to find audience and acceptance in the court of heaven; which privilege was purchased for us, and is still granted to us by our powerful Advocate and Mediator at God's right hand; and while we abide in his Church, and agree in our petitions, we may be assured will be continued to us. He will hear the private and secret prayers of the family and the closet, for the supply of our particular wants, and much more the public petitions offered up by the joint consent and agreement of the Church, for the good of the whole; for he delights in the assemblies of his saints, and will be ever propitious to those that draw nigh unto him; especially if our prayers be accompanied with hearty desires and endeavours to please him by fruitfulness in good works, which redound to his praise and glory.

For 'herein (saith our Saviour) is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.' The glory of God is the chief end of our being, and our fruitfulness in good works is our best way of promoting it; not that we can make the least addition to his essential glory, which ever was, and will be the same for ever, and admits of no increase or decrease by any thing we can say or do. But God esteems himself glorified in the good deeds of his people, which are the effects of his grace working in them, and represent the holiness of our heavenly Father in the holiness of his children. And therefore our Saviour exhorts, that 'our good works should shine before men, that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven;' these things administering to the setting forth of his glory, Matt. v. 16.

A bad life dishonours God, and disgraces our profession, and we blemish both by an unworthy and unsuitable conversation; yea, we give occasion to the enemy to blaspheme by our wicked lives, and deal with God as Simeon and Levi did with Jacob, 'make his name to stink among the inhabitants of the land.' Whereas by works of piety and virtue we bring credit to his name, and the abounding in fruits of righteousness will redound to his praise and glory.

And as bearing much fruit is the best way of glorifying God, so will it give the best proof of our discipleship; 'So shall ye be my disciples,' saith Christ; that is, you shall hereby shew yourselves true followers of me and my doctrine, by doing things worthy of, and agreeable to both: by this means it will appear, that you seek my honour, as I seek the glory of my Father; and that will bring you at last to a crown of endless bliss and glory.

This our Saviour here further urges from the love that he bears to his disciples and followers, which is like that which the Father beareth unto him; 'As the Father hath loved me, (saith he,) so have I loved you; continue ye in my love.' The love that God the Father bore to his Son, is the most intense, and carries in it the highest degrees of affection; and if the love of Christ be the same towards us, it must inflame his breast with the purest and most ardent affection. And that so it does, is evident by the many and great demonstrations he hath given us of it; for he hath loved us to the death, having laid down his life, and shed his most precious blood for us; 'and greater love than this hath no man, to lay down his life for his friend.' And yet Christ hath in a manner shewed to us greater love than this, in laying down his life for his enemies; 'For when we were enemies, (saith the apostle,) we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son.' Rom. v. 10.

Now the force of our Saviour's argument here lies in this, that if God the Father thus loved his Son for doing and submitting to his will in all things, the same love of Christ to us should in like manner engage us to do nothing but what is grateful and well-pleasing to him; the known properties of true love being a study to please, and a desire to enjoy. The way to please him, is by bearing much fruit, and that too will be the way to enjoy him for ever; for 'if we have our fruit unto holiness, the end will be everlasting life,' Rom. vi. 22. And by both these we shall continue his love to us, and ours to him, which are best preserved by holiness and true obedience. So our Saviour declares in the next words, 'If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love;' meaning, that as he secured the continuance of his Father's love, by fulfilling his will, and keeping his laws; so may we secure the continuance of our Saviour's love and favour to us, by a constant and ready obedience to his commands.

Indeed, Christ, both here and elsewhere, hath made this the truest mark and criterion of our love to him; 'If ye love me, (saith he,) keep my commandments,' John xiv. 15. The disciples there would fain shew their love to Christ, by their unwillingness to lose his company; he had a little before told them of his leaving of them, and going to his Father; they presently grew sad upon the news, which shewed that they loved him, and would fain keep him still with them. But Christ did not take that for a sufficient sign or token of true affection; for this might be an argument only that they loved themselves, because they received much good by his stay, which they were not willing to lose by his departure. And therefore our Saviour gave them another more certain and infallible mark or testimony of their love to him, and that was the observing his precepts; 'If ye love me indeed, keep my commandments.' This is the way he would have us to express our affection to him; for 'he that keepeth my

commandments, (saith he,) he it is that loveth me;' and he that keepeth them not, beareth no true affection to me. Ye are 'my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you;' but 'ye are enemies to me by evil works,' and your disobedience bids defiance to me. In short, to continue in Christ's love is to continue in Christ's laws; and then we shall find, that 'in keeping his commandments there will be great reward.'

'These things (saith our Saviour) have I spoken unto you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy might be full.' Wherein he acquaints them with the reason and end of this his large discourse with them; which was, that the comfort they had found in his presence might remain with them in his absence; and that the Holy Ghost, which would come to them when he was gone, might fulfil their joy, and complete their consolation.

This is the sum and substance of the gospel for this day; wherein is set forth,—

1. The great benefit of being members of Christ's Church, and continuing in it, represented by the branches of a vine, and abiding in it; which will enable us to bring forth good fruit, and to abound in the graces of the Spirit, which will in due time ripen into glory. And,—

2. The great danger of being shut out of Christ's Church, or cut off from this vine; which will render us barren and unfruitful, and like withered branches good for nothing, but to be cut down and cast into the fire. And both of them call upon us to beware of all voluntary separation, whereby we cut off ourselves from Christ's Church; and likewise to dread the sentence of excommunication, whereby we are cut off from it by others: and by both put ourselves out of the ordinary way and method of salvation, and, without repentance and returning, fall into the broad way that leadeth to destruction; from which, good Lord, deliver us.

DISCOURSE CCLXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES'S DAY.

JAMES i. 1—12.—*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience: but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing,* &c.

OUR Church celebrates this day the memory of two eminent saints, St. Philip and St. James, both of them apostles of Christ. Some ancient writers tell us, that in the primitive church the apostles had not several days appointed for their solemn remembrance; but were all commemorated together on one day: in the Latin church, on this first of May; in the Greek, on the

feast of St. Peter and St. Paul: but in after times particular days were assigned for the more solemn commemorating of each, as it is with us to this day.

However that be, St. Philip and St. James are here coupled to be remembered together in one day. The collect for the day likewise joins them together, beseeching 'Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life, to grant us perfectly to know his Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that following the steps of his holy apostles St. Philip and St. James, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same Jesus Christ his Son our Lord.'

The epistle for the day gives us some account of the life and doctrine of St. James, and the gospel of St. Philip; both which are therefore to be particularly spoken to: beginning first with St. James.

And here we meet with two of that name: the one, James the son of Zebedee, called James the Great, whose memory is celebrated on the 25th of July; the other, James the son of Joseph, before he married the Virgin Mary, and so the brother of our Lord. He is called James the Less, either for the difference of stature, as some think, being less in body than James the Great; or for the difference of age, as others conceive, being less in years than he. He was for his piety and virtue surnamed Justus, or James the Just. He was the first bishop of Jerusalem, either constituted so by our blessed Saviour, a little before his ascension; or elected by the apostles soon after, for his relation to him. He was honoured with a particular appearance of our Lord to him, after his resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 7, 'He was seen of James.' And he after presided in the great council of the apostles at Jerusalem, and determined that great controversy about the obligation of Moses's law; of which we read Acts xv.

This is the St. James that we commemorate this day: he wrote the General Epistle of St. James, part whereof is appointed to be read for this day's epistle, of which I come now to treat.

It begins with a kind salutation of them to whom it is written, in these words: 'James a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.' Where though he was the brother of our Lord, and bishop of Jerusalem, the mother of all other churches, yet he styles himself a servant of the Lord Jesus: neither the greatness of his relation, nor the dignity of his station, could exalt him in his thoughts above the condition and opinion of a servant; which shews the lowliness and humility of his mind, who, like his Saviour, took upon him the form of a servant, though too many in that condition aspire to the honour of masters, and exalt themselves to the dignity and title of such.

The persons to whom he sent this epistle, were 'the twelve tribes scattered abroad;' that is, the Jewish Christians dispersed every where among the Gentiles; whom he greets by the name

of brethren, a farther instance of his humility; and then fortifies them against all those temptations, that might endanger their faith, and discourage them from professing and persevering in it. 'My brethren, (saith he,) count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;' that is, be so far from being discouraged by any troubles or tribulations you may meet with in Christ's cause, that you should look upon it as a matter of great joy, that you have thereby an opportunity of shewing your constancy and fidelity to him: reckon it rather among the favours than the frowns of heaven, that your faith is put to the trial in the furnace of affliction, from whence, by patience and perseverance, it will come forth more refined and purified. This is the end of God's sending or permitting afflictions to befall us, not for our prejudice, but for the exercise of our patience: and this will be the effect of our not fainting under them; for 'the trial of our faith worketh patience;' and that, perseverance; and both, the purity of holiness and perfection of happiness: which gainful effects of affliction may give us that superiority of mind, and victory over ourselves, as may enable us rather to rejoice than faint under tribulations. In order whereunto, the apostle advises them to 'let patience have her perfect work,' without the least murmuring or repining; and to hold out to the end, 'that they may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;' meaning, that instead of sinking, this would raise their hearts to rejoicing in God, to blessing and praising of him for adversity as well as prosperity; which is the highest pitch and perfection of this virtue, and will make them perfect and entire Christians, wanting nothing to complete their character, and secure their felicity.

But, because we cannot arrive to this degree of perfection by our own power, nor attain this fortitude and constancy of mind ourselves, St. James here directs us where we may go for it with an assurance of obtaining it: 'If any of you lack wisdom,' to judge rightly of afflictions, and spiritual strength and courage to bear them, 'let him ask it of God,' who hath all power and might, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and, to encourage us to have recourse to him, adds, 'that he giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.' He freely 'giveth' this spiritual wisdom, and bestows his grace without any merit or purchase of ours: and he giveth to 'all men;' his bounty is not confined to a few, or shut up within a narrow compass; but his mercy is over all his works, and extends itself to all men that duly ask and apply to him for it. He excludes none that are willing to come to him, but opens his hand to all that open their mouths for it. And this he doth not in scanty measures, or with a sparing, but liberal and bountiful hand: so the Psalmist tells us, 'He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness.' He is not niggardly of his blessings, nor doth he pinch or spare, but 'giveth to all men liberally;' and that, too, without reproaching or upbraiding any

with it,—'He upbraideth not.' It is the pride and folly of many men to be often twitting and casting others in the teeth with what they have given or done for them; against which evil practice, Seneca, a wise heathen, hath given a good caution, *Qui dedit beneficium* (saith he) *taceat, narret qui accepit.* He that hath done another a good turn, let him be silent, and leave it to the receiver to divulge and publish his charity; for he that upbraids or boasts of it hath paid himself, and lost both the honour and reward of his bounty.

But though this be too frequent with men, yet it is quite otherwise with God; for he giveth to all men liberally, 'and upbraideth not.' Which is abundant encouragement to all persons to go to him for spiritual strength and wisdom, to bear up cheerfully under all trials and afflictions that may befall them; especially having a sure promise of succeeding in what they ask, from the next words, 'and it shall be given unto them.' We need not doubt of receiving what he thus puts us upon asking; for He, who is truth itself, cannot fail of his word, or falsify his promise.

But yet it is not all asking neither, that will prevail with him; for St. James, the saint of this day, tells us, that 'many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss;' and therefore he wills us, in the next words, to 'ask in faith, nothing wavering;' that is, with a full persuasion of being heard, without giving way to any diffidence or distrust. For God having passed his word of giving to him that asks, we may safely depend upon his veracity, and cannot entertain any doubts about it, without casting unworthy reflections on his truth and faithfulness; for all doubting and distrust calls in question either his power or his willingness to perform his promise; which is to charge the Almighty either with impotence or imposture, either of which will shut his ears against all our petitions. And therefore we must banish all such desponding and despairing thoughts of God in our addresses to him, and ask him always in full assurance of faith.

But beside that, to 'ask in faith, nothing wavering,' implies asking with a firm adherence to him in all troubles, coming to him with a resolved mind, whatever happens, to stick to him; not shrinking from him in any hardship, nor flying to any indirect means to be delivered from them; but in all our trials to cast ourselves upon the power and providence of God, without making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience: doing nothing under the greatest sufferings, but what is right and acceptable to him, and at all times 'holding fast the profession of our faith without wavering. For he that wavereth (saith our apostle) is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed;' meaning, that doubting and wavering keep men in a perpetual tempest and agitation of mind, driven about with every wind of doctrine, and tossed to and fro with every wave of persecution. Such a one blasts the design, and defeats the issue and success of all his

prayers: 'For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.' Such do but deceive themselves with vain hopes, who imagine that such prayers will avail any thing before God. 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' and unsuccessful in all his prayers. Where, by a double-minded man, we understand a man that hath no steadiness of mind, nor any certain rule of action, but is of one mind to-day, and of another to-morrow, and varies with the wind and tide of human affairs: like Janus, he hath a double face, and looks two different ways; he commonly swims with the stream, and with the boatmen looks one way, and rows another. He is a man full of doubts, like Agrippa, half a Christian and half a heathen; the least scruple perplexes him, but the greatest reason cannot satisfy him: and though he sees cause to favour all religions, yet he cannot find truth enough in them to stick to any. He often plays a double game, and, like an expert gamester, can sometimes cog, and sometimes use false dice. This is expressed in Scripture by 'the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' Eph. iv. 14. He hath a double heart and a double tongue; his mind agrees not with his words, nor his words with his actions: for he thinks one thing, and says another; and likewise says one thing, and does another. 'They speak vanity every one with their neighbour, (saith the Psalmist,) they flatter with their lips, and dissemble with their double heart.' Psalm xii. 2. In short, a double-minded man is a sort of weathercock, that turns with the wind, and is carried about with every blast of vain doctrine.

Such double-minded men are here said to be 'unstable in all their ways,' and so wavering and uncertain in all their petitions. They are unstable in matters of religion, like the worshippers of Baal, halting between two opinions; inclining sometimes to the Church, at other times to the conventicle, as interest, pride, or prejudice lead them. By which giddiness and instability many are led from one sect to another, till they lose all religion, and settle at last in atheism and infidelity. And who can think that the prayers of such men should find any audience or acceptance with God?

Again, such double-minded men are unstable in matters of government, being often given to change, and playing fast and loose with the State as well as the Church. They will adhere to the government, while they can serve their own ends by it; but if the tide turns, they then plot and combine to undermine it. They can be pleased with monarchy, whilst the monarch pleases them; but if they be digusted, then for a commonwealth, or any body rather than their natural and rightful prince. This is to make themselves not the subjects and servants, but the masters and controllers of princes; robbing kings of their sovereignty, and placing the supremacy in the people; which will make both God and man deaf to all their petitions.

Once more, a double-minded man is unstable in matters of commerce and conversation with mankind, being neither true to his word, nor constant to his promises, nor faithful in trusts, nor just in his dealings and bargains with others; but moving in all by the wheels of interest and double-dealing, suiting his discourse to the place and company wherein he is, and turning his tale by the tide of times and affairs; becoming 'all things to all men,' in another sense than St. Paul meant it, not 'to gain some,' but to get something. And how can it be thought, that God, who 'is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, without variableness or shadow of turning,' should regard the petitions of such variable and unstable persons?

And now, the apostle having exhorted all Christians rather to rejoice than repine at any trials or afflictions that befall them, and directed them how to attain to such a firmness and fortitude; which is by asking it of God, who is ever ready and willing to give it; together with the way and manner of asking it aright, which is in faith without wavering: he addresseth himself to all sorts of persons, high and low, rich and poor, to consider and act accordingly; saying, in the next words, 'Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the rich in that he is made low;' meaning, that as the poor may comfort himself in being raised to a higher condition, as the reward of his patience; so let the rich be thankful that he is brought low, for the correction of his pride, that both may reap the comfort and benefit of their afflictions. Adding for a reason, the shortness of human life, and the vanity of all earthly prosperity; 'because as the flower of the grass they shall pass away. For the sun (saith he) is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth; so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways.' Where he compares all worldly felicity to the herbs and flowers of the field, which are either scorched by the heat of summer, or destroyed by the cold of winter; both ways they vanish and die away. Even so man in his best estate is altogether vanity, for he fadeth away suddenly 'like the grass, which in the morning is green and groweth up, but in the evening is cut down, dried up, and withered.' Psalm xc. To the same purpose speaks St. Peter, 'All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.' 1 Pet. i. 24. So transitory and short-lived is all worldly wealth and prosperity, which ofttimes tend to the present hurt of the possessors here, and end in their future misery and ruin hereafter.

Whereas, 'blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;' that is, adversity well improved will promote our present good, and advance our future happiness; for the rod frequently corrects our

wanderings, and reduces us to a sound mind: and where that is, these short trials will soon end, and work out for us an eternal weight of glory.

This is the sum of this day's epistle, wherein St. James, the saint of this day, teaches us the hard lesson of patience and joy in tribulations; a lesson which none but good men can learn, and nothing but the grace of God can instil into us; which we are, therefore, to ask in faith with the greatest fervency.

This lesson we are taught by the example of the saint of this day, who underwent many sharp and difficult trials for the cause of Christ; which made his faith the more bright, laudable, and glorious. His last and great trial, which put an end to his life, was from the Scribes and Pharisees; who by flattering speeches drew him up to the top of the temple, there publicly to declare before a great confluence of people his sentiments concerning Christ, thinking by that means to make him renounce him: but he, on the contrary, being advantageously placed upon a pinnacle or wing of the temple, where he might be seen and heard of all, boldly asserted Christ to be the true Messias, from whom alone salvation was to be expected, and that he whom they crucified was now at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all that believe in him: which he averred with that confidence and force of argument, that the people hearing him below, presently glorified the blessed Jesus, and cried, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' At which his enemies being enraged, threw him down from the high place where he stood; where though much bruised, yet he was not killed by the fall, but he recovered strength enough to get upon his knees, and to pray God to forgive them: and, while he was thus praying for them, they loaded him with a shower of stones, till one more cruel than the rest, with a fuller's club beat out his brains.

Thus died this holy man a bloody death by the hands of barbarous enemies: from whose great example, let us learn with him to be faithful unto death, and then with him too we shall receive a crown of life; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES'S DAY.

JOHN xiv. 1—15.—*And Jesus said to his disciples, Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you, and will come again and receive you unto myself: and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how should we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Philip saith unto him, Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth*, &c.

THE epistle, of which I treated in my last, gave us some account of the life and doctrine of St. James, one of the saints of this

day; and particularly of his directions, how to attain to the excellent grace of patience and perseverance under all the trials and sufferings of this present life, so as to arrive at last to the happiness of the next.

The gospel, of which I am now to treat, gives us some account of St. Philip, the other saint coupled with St. James, and commemorated together this day. He was born at Bethsaida, a town of Galilee, near the sea of Tiberias, inhabited mostly by fishermen, and famed for little else but rudeness and incivility. Hence our Saviour, by way of reproach, was called a Galilean: 'Can any good come out of Nazareth?' (a city of Galilee,) was a proverbial saying; and 'out of Galilee (say the Pharisees) there ariseth no prophet.' And yet out of this despicable place our Saviour chose most of his disciples, to be his instruments in converting the world, to shew that by the weak and foolish things of the world he could confound the wisdom of the wise.

The parents of Philip were so obscure, that we find no mention of them: it is thought his father was a fisherman, the general trade of Bethsaida, and that he too was brought up to the same.

However that be, he had the honour of being first called to the discipleship; for though Christ first met with Andrew and Peter, yet they soon parted from him, and returned to their trade, and were not called till a year after; but the next day our Saviour meeting Philip, bid him to follow him, the usual form of calling disciples; and he immediately left all and followed him. Soon after, he brought in Nathaniel and others to be his disciples. Upon the dispersion of the apostles, Philip was sent to plant and preach the gospel in Upper Asia, and coming at last to Hierapolis in Phrygia, he there laid down his life, and suffered martyrdom in the cause of Christ, and the propagation of his gospel.

But to come to the gospel for the day: it begins with Christ's comforting his disciples upon his going away from them; for when he talked to them of his leaving the world, and ascending up to heaven, and going to his Father, they were extremely dejected at the thoughts of his departure; which he perceiving, sought to raise their sinking spirits, saying to them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me;' that is, be not dismayed at my withdrawing awhile from you; put your trust in God, and believe in me, and then you shall be no losers, but great gainers by my short absence from you. 'For in my Father's house are many mansions:' I am going to heaven, where there is abundantly room enough for me, and all that believe on me. I do not go about to flatter or deceive you, for 'if it were not so, I would have told you;' you may depend upon it, I tell you the truth in this matter. 'I go to prepare a place for you.' My going a little before, is to be your harbinger to make provision for you. 'And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will,' as an harbinger, 'come back again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also;' that is,

I will shortly meet you again, and introduce you into my Father's kingdom. 'And whither I go you know, and the way ye know:' You cannot but know, that I am going to the Father, having often told you; nor can you be ignorant of the way that leads to him, having plainly directed you in the path that will surely bring you thither.

To this Thomas, the distrustful disciple, objected, and 'saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?' Not that he was wholly ignorant of the one or the other, having often heard of both; but he knew them not so clearly and certainly as he desired, and his doubting temper called for fuller satisfaction; which our Saviour therefore gave him. 'Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life;' *i. e.* 'I am the way,' by the example I have set before you; 'I am the truth,' by the doctrine which I have preached unto you; and 'I am the life,' by laying down my own life to purchase eternal life for you. Or, as others paraphrase it, 'I am the way' in mine own person, 'the truth' in my doctrine, and 'the life' in the quickening graces of my Spirit. And 'no man cometh to the Father (saith he) but by me;' which is as if he had said, I am the true living way, appointed by my Father to direct all men in the way to him; and there is no other way of coming to the knowledge and enjoyment of him, but by me, and by going the same way that I lead or go before you. So that 'if you had known me, (saith he,) ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him;' that is, if you had been thoroughly acquainted with me, and my doctrine, who am come, and speak and do all things in his name, you would have come to a better understanding of the Father also; for he being invisible, is no otherwise to be known, than as he is revealed in and by me. So that although you have never seen the Father, yet having seen and known me, who am his living image, you have both seen and known him.

To this discourse of our Saviour's, Philip, the saint of this day, makes a somewhat strange reply; for not considering the sense of the last words, 'he saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' For Christ having told him, that he was the image of the Father, and he that had seen him had seen the Father; who being a Spirit, was not visible to our bodily eyes, and could only be seen in and by him: this was an unnecessary and impertinent demand, and proceeded either from ignorance or inadvertence; which our Saviour therefore mildly rebuked in him, saying, 'Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' After so long an attendance upon me, thou mightest easily have known and seen that I am the image of my Father, and the express character and representation of his person; his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness brightly shining and appearing in me: so that by seeing and knowing of me, thou mightest have seen and known the Father

also; and how comest thou now to be ignorant of this, and after so long time that thou hast seen me, to say, 'Shew us the Father?'

From this gentle reproof of his ignorance in these matters, after three years' education under Christ's discipline and institution, we may learn two or three useful lessons.

(1.) That Christ expects an improvement in his followers, according to the time and measure of the talents and advantages afforded to them; for he here blames Philip for the small improvement he had made in the knowledge of him and his Father, after so long attendance upon his instructions. Hast thou known me so long time, saith he, and seen the image of the Father in in me, and yet 'sayest thou now, Shew us the Father?' St. Paul speaks of some, that for the time they had enjoyed the means of grace, 'might have been teachers of others, and yet had need to be taught themselves, what are the first principles of the oracles of God.' And of others, that 'they were ever learning, but never came to the knowledge of the truth.' 2 Tim. iii. 7.

Such as these, like truants, make none or a bad improvement in Christ's school, and justly deserve shame and punishment; as may be seen in the parable of the talents: which may teach us to make a better use of the time and talents entrusted with us.

(2.) We may observe here, that our Saviour concealed not the faults and failings of his own disciples, but as occasion served gave them many mild rebukes for them: so he did with Philip here, for his small proficiency in the knowledge of him, and not better improving the time and opportunities he had of learning of him. And elsewhere in trying his faith he found it weak and deficient; for when he was about to feed five thousand by miracle in the wilderness, where all provisions failed, he asked Philip, 'Whence he should buy bread, that they might eat?' This question he put to him merely to 'prove him, for he himself knew what he would do.' But Philip in a distrustful manner 'answered, that two hundred pennyworth of bread was not sufficient for every one to take a little;' meaning, that he could not conceive how so much provision might be had, as to suffice so great a multitude; not knowing or considering, that it was as easy to a Divine power to feed five thousand as one single person; nothing being difficult or impossible to him, that can do all things, as he after found.

Again, we find our Saviour blaming the slowness of another disciple's understanding, and the backwardness of his faith; saying to Thomas, who required the evidence of his senses, and the most palpable demonstrations, before he would believe, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen thou believest, but blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed,' John xx.

At other times we find him checking the infidelity and slackness of belief of his own apostles, saying, 'O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written!' Luke xxiv. 25.

Again, he rebuked the drowsiness of his disciples, who, in the night before his passion, fell asleep more than once, whilst he was praying to his Father, and deprecating the bitter cup; for which great coldness of affection and seeming unconcernedness for his sufferings, he gave them this mild reproof, 'What, could you not watch with me one hour?' Matt. xxvi. 40, 41. Adding withal that good lesson, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.'

Furthermore, we may observe that the Holy Scriptures, in relating the lives and actions of the saints, take notice of their failings and miscarriages, as well as their virtues. Thus Philip's non-proficiency here, and elsewhere David's murder and adultery, Peter's denial of his Master, Paul's being a persecutor and unbeliever, stand all upon record in sacred writ; partly to teach us not to presume upon our own strength without God's grace, and partly not to despair of mercy upon our true repentance.

But to go on with our Saviour's discourse with Philip; to strengthen his faith, and increase his knowledge in him, our Saviour puts the question again to him, 'Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works;' that is, dost thou not yet see the image of the Father shining in me? and behold the divine power, wisdom, and goodness in lively characters stamped upon and represented in me? which is so true, that whatsoever I say or do, is by appointment and commission from the Father; I speak not of myself, but it is God that speaks to you in my doctrine, and it is he that confirms it to you by my miracles; it is his power that acts in and by me, and the Father that is ever present with and dwelleth in me, he it is that doth the works that ye see me do. So that you may safely take my word, and 'believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me;' we are inseparably united together in nature and will; all the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in me, and all that I teach or do, proceed jointly from the Father and me.

But if you will not give so much credit to my word and doctrine, as to 'believe that I and my Father are one, yet believe me for the very work's sake.' The very miracles that you have seen with your own eyes may easily demonstrate a divine power; and if there were nothing else, the works done before you are sufficient to convince you that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; and that there is an almighty power residing in both.

To the same purpose spake our Saviour to them that accused him of blasphemy, for saying he was the Son of God, John x. 37, 38. 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him;' that is, if I do not perform those acts that plainly manifest a

divine power, and testify that I come from God, you have then some colour for your unbelief; but if I perform such acts as clearly prove these things, then your infidelity must be unreasonable and inexcusable; and if you have not faith enough to believe what I say, yet let your faith rest on those works that you see me do, which evidently shew that the Father acts in me, and I in him; and consequently that I and my Father are one. Where he appeals to his works for the truth of his doctrine, as he doth here, and in sundry other places; which may therefore teach us these two great lessons:—

1st, That a power of working miracles is a plain evidence of a divine testimony. And,—

2dly, That our Saviour had this evidence for the truth of his doctrine and Messiahship. For the

1st, Of all the ways of proving any person or thing to come from God, there can be none so certain and infallible as a power of working miracles; for this is, as it were, the broad seal of heaven to confirm a divine commission, and to testify the truth of any pretended revelation; which is evident to any that considers that none but God can alter the course of nature, and that he never doth so but for great and weighty reasons. That God can do so, is evident from his omnipotent and almighty power, which is able to do all things, and to which nothing is impossible; he that made all things out of nothing, can unmake and alter them when he pleases.

This is above the reach of all natural and created beings, who have all their power from him, and can do nothing without him; and consequently are so far from doing miracles, that they cannot of themselves exert any of the common and ordinary actions of human life. God is described to be 'glorious in holiness, doing wonders;' he can raise the dead, and cure all diseases with a word speaking, and do whatever pleases him; but this he never doth, but upon weighty occasions; he doth not set this seal either to a blank or an imposture. Now our Saviour's works being the effects of a supernatural and divine power, plainly shew him to come from God, and abundantly confirm the truth of his doctrine; which made Nicodemus own him for 'a teacher come from God, for none could do the works that he did unless God were with him,' John iii. So that he might well appeal to his miracles, and say, 'Believe me for the very work's sake.' And to encourage his disciples to do so, he tells them in the next words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father.' Where he resumes his former argument of comforting his disciples upon his going away from them, telling them, that they may safely rely upon him as the Messias, and the works they had seen him do, were great enough to satisfy them of the truth of what he had said to them; adding for their comfort, that when he was gone,

they should do the same or greater works than he had done; for he was going to the Father, to send the Holy Ghost to them, whereby they should have those miraculous gifts and graces, that should enable them to convert the world, to cast down idols, and to overcome all opposition; works of a higher esteem and greater excellency, than the miracles he had wrought among them. 'These signs (saith he) shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents, if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover,' Mark xvi. 17, 18, which is meant of that plentiful effusion of divine power and grace, that fell on the apostles upon the descent of the Holy Ghost, Acts. ii.

And to beget the greater confidence in him, he farther tells them, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;' that is, whatever supply of grace or power shall be at any time wanting in any exigence of your own, or the Church, shall upon your request be granted to you, that the Father may be glorified in me, and that you may be enabled to promote the honour of him that sent me.

Finally, rest assured that 'if you ask any thing in my name, I will do it.' And let this comfort you in my short absence from you, that you shall want no assistance or encouragement in doing what I command you, till I come again and take you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

This is a brief account of the gospel for this day, which contains our Saviour's discourse with Philip, the saint of this day; wherein he shews himself by his doctrine and example to be the true way that leads to eternal life, proving by his many miracles and wonderful works, that he was sent from God for the salvation of mankind, and that we cannot see or know God, but in and by him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. And though he was then returning to him, yet he lets his disciples know, that it was to prepare for their reception, and that his withdrawing from them awhile, was greatly for their advantage; for he would send them his Holy Spirit, and give them such supplies of grace, and of ghostly comfort and assistance, as would shortly bring them to his heavenly kingdom: wherefore comfort one another with these words.

DISCOURSE CCLXVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. BARNABAS'S DAY.

ACTS xi. 22, to the end.—*Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem; and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch; who when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted*

them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith; and much people was added unto the Lord, &c.

THE saint we remember this day is St. Barnabas, who was born at Cyprus, of Jewish parents, and descended of the tribe of Levi. He was first called Joses or Joseph, and after surnamed Barnabas, for the consolation he administered to the poor Christians, by selling his estate for their relief, as we read, Acts iv. 36, 37.

He was educated at Jerusalem, where with St. Paul he sat at the feet of the learned Gamaliel; which perhaps occasioned that great friendship and familiarity, that was after between them.

The particular time of his conversion to Christianity is not certainly known; it is supposed to be a little before St. Paul's conversion, because when St. Paul went up to Jerusalem, and 'assayed to join himself to the disciples there, they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple, till Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared' unto them the manner of his conversion, 'how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him; and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus,' Acts ix. 26, 27.

He is generally affirmed to be one of the seventy disciples chosen by our Saviour, giving an early proof of his love to him, by comforting and relieving his distressed members.

The collect for the day makes mention of the 'singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, with which he was endowed;' withal teaching us to pray for a competent measure of the 'like gifts,' and 'likewise for grace to use them always to God's honour and glory.'

The epistle for the day, of which I am now to speak, gives us some account of St. Barnabas's first employment in the service of the Church, which is ushered in with these words, 'Tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church, which was in Jerusalem; and they sent Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.' The tidings here referred to, was St. Peter's free converse with, and preaching unto the Gentiles, which news was brought from Antioch to Jerusalem; an account whereof was briefly this:—

St. Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, and preached only to the Jews, was warned of God in a vision, 'not to account the Gentiles common and unclean,' but freely to 'eat and converse with them;' thereby 'perceiving, (as himself declares,) that God was no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.' Accordingly finding that Cornelius and many other of the Gentiles believed in the Lord Jesus, and received the Holy Ghost, as well as the Jews, he preached to them, and commanded them to be 'baptized in the name of the Lord.'

Hereupon many of the brethren of the circumcision took great offence, and contended with St. Peter about this freedom, till he had declared unto them the heavenly vision whereby his commission was enlarged, and how he was ordered to converse with, and preach unto the Gentiles. At which 'they held their peace,' ceased their contention, and 'glorified God, who had to the Gentiles also granted repentance unto life;' as we read at large in this chapter.

This was the news or 'tidings that came to the ears of the church that was at Jerusalem,' how God had prospered the preaching of the gospel, and brought in daily many converts among the Gentiles, who 'believed in Christ, and turned unto the Lord.'

Whereupon the apostles, who were then at Jerusalem, 'sent forth Barnabas, to go' and confirm them from city to city, 'as far as Antioch; who when he came there, and saw the grace of God, was glad:' where by the 'grace of God' is meant the gospel, which is often so styled in the New Testament; the preaching whereof being an act of the greatest grace and favour that was ever shewed to mankind. And when Barnabas saw the good success of it, he rejoiced greatly to find what progress the gospel had made among them, 'and exhorted them all with full purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord;' that is, cordially to stick to Christ, and steadfastly to hold fast their faith in him, that nothing might draw them from him.

And here the writer of these acts takes occasion to give a character of St. Barnabas, and to set forth the success of his labours, saying, 'He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord. He was a good man,' one that studied the good of the Church, and the welfare of mankind, as appeared by his zeal in propagating Christianity, and his charity in supporting his Christian brethren. Again, 'He was full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith;' he was endued with many excellent gifts and graces of the Spirit, with wisdom, and knowledge, and the fear of God, abounding in faith and piety, and in the work of the Lord. And this his 'labour was not in vain in the Lord,' for by his means 'much people was added unto the Lord:' he made many converts to Christianity, and brought great numbers to believe and receive the gospel; he was called to the converting and confirming the Gentile world.

And because this work was too great for a single hand, Barnabas 'departed to Tarsus, to seek for Saul,' to engage him to join with him for the accomplishing of so great a work: to which end they both returned again to Antioch, where they laboured together a whole year in the establishment of that Church; for they frequently 'assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people,' instructing and confirming all that came to them. And when both Jews and Gentiles promiscuously received the gospel, they became alike the disciples of Christ, and

being all united into 'one body of the Church,' they were united in 'one name' too.

'And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch;' where the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile being broken down, and both admitted into one fold, under one Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, all names of distinction were taken away, and they became 'all one in Christ Jesus.' This is implied in the new name of 'Christians' then given to them, who were before called 'disciples,' 'believers,' and 'brethren,' and by their enemies 'Nazarenes' and 'Galileans.' But here they were all styled 'Christians,' which name is continued among us to this day.

We find a prophecy in Isaiah, that 'when the Gentiles should come in and see the righteousness of God, all kings should behold their glory, and they should be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord should name.' Isa. lxii. 2. This prophecy is supposed to have been fulfilled at this time, when the 'disciples were all called Christians first in Antioch;' at which time this new name was first given both to Jews and Gentiles, who by this divine signature were both marked up for Christ's flock.

But how was this new name given? Why, that we may well think was not by chance, nor in any common or ordinary way, for then the holy Scripture would not have taken such notice of it; but by some divine impulse and direction: for the new name mentioned by Isaiah was such 'as the mouth of the Lord should name;' meaning, that it should be dictated by him, or be ordered and directed by his Holy Spirit.

This some have thought to be implied in the word here used in the original, which is not ἐκαλοῦνλο, but χρηματίσαν, which signifies not an ordinary way of naming a thing, but the doing of it in a divine and oracular manner; and gives us to understand, that this name of Christian was not given upon a common or slight occasion, but for weighty reasons, and by God's own appointment.

But to go on with the epistle for the day, the next words tell us, that 'in those days came prophets from Jerusalem to Antioch;' that is, some chief pastors, possibly bishops of Judea, that had the gift of prophecy, were ordered to come there by the Church at Jerusalem, to settle some matters.

These prophets and teachers, during their stay at Antioch, were to ordain elders, and set in order things that were wanting; and one day 'as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said unto them, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them:' that is, they were either by a revelation from God, or by some secret impulse of his Holy Spirit, commanded to ordain or consecrate Barnabas and Saul to the apostleship, to which God had already designed them. 'And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on

them (a ceremony used in conferring of orders ever since) they sent them away.' Acts xiii. And being thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost, they went first to Seleucia, and from thence to Cyprus, the native country of St. Barnabas, where they preached the word of God with good success, and did many wonderful works for its confirmation. At Paphos, a city in that island, one Sergius Paulus, deputy of the country, a prudent man, hearing of Barnabas and Saul, called for them, 'and desired to hear from them the word of God;' but Elymas a sorcerer, then with him, 'withstood the apostles, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.' At which Saul, who was also called Paul, moved by the Holy Ghost, 'set his eyes upon him,' and after a sharp rebuke, with a look of his countenance, struck him with blindness; which when the deputy saw, 'he believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord,' as we read in that chapter.

From Paphos they went to Perga in Pamphylia, where Mark their kinsman and companion left them, being discouraged by the dangers they met with in their travels: from whence, by a persecution raised against them, they departed, and came to Iconium and Lystra; where finding 'an impotent cripple, that had been lame from his mother's womb, and never had walked; and perceiving he had faith to be healed,' they with a loud voice said, 'Stand upright on thy feet:' and upon the bare speaking of those words, he immediately 'leaped and walked about.' At the sight hereof, the people were astonished, and cried up the apostles for gods, styling Barnabas, for the gravity of his countenance and carriage, by the name of Jupiter, their supreme deity, 'and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker;' and the people were just ready to do sacrifice unto them, had not the apostles with much difficulty restrained them, checking their idolatry, and exhorting them to turn from these vanities unto the living God; as you may read, Acts xiv.

After this, there arose some difference between these two great friends and apostles, Paul and Barnabas; it began with the controversy of imposing the Jewish rites upon the Gentile converts, which Barnabas at first strenuously opposed, and went with Paul to consult the council at Jerusalem, where this matter was determined in favour of the Gentile converts, that this yoke should not be put upon them.

But afterwards Barnabas was drawn aside by St. Peter, too far to dissemble, and betray this christian libery to please the Jews, which St. Paul blamed and reproved in him; whereupon another difference soon arose between them: for these two apostles having agreed to visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the word of God, and to see how they did, Barnabas determined to take his kinsman John, surnamed Mark, along with them; but Paul thought not fit to take him with them, because he before left them at Pamphylia, and went not on with the work. This contention was so sharp between them, that

they parted asunder one from the other; and so Barnabas took Mark and went to Cyprus, and Paul chose Silas and went to the churches of Syria and Cilicia: of these things we read at large in Acts xv. and Gal. ii.

This contest however did, by the wisdom of God's providence, turn to the good and benefit of the Church; for by their parting, the doctrine of Christ and the gospel spread wider, and became more diffusive than if they had continued together. And Mark (as one hath observed) much amended by St. Paul's reproof, and became more constant and diligent in the work of the gospel; insomuch that St. Paul sent for him, and gave that commendation of him, that 'he was profitable to him for the work of the ministry.' 2 Tim. iv. 11.

But it is time to return to the prophets whom we left at Antioch, where the epistle for the day tells us of 'one of them, named Agabus, who stood up and signified by the Spirit, that there should be great dearth throughout all the world;' meaning through all the land of Judea, and of the Roman empire, 'which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.' History makes mention of two great dearths in the days of Claudius, within the space of three years, of which this is supposed to be the first and greatest, when the brethren in Judea were reduced to extreme want, and to all the miseries of a severe famine: 'then' it was that 'the disciples, every man, according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren that dwelt in Judea.' The charity of all good Christians was then moved to a liberal contribution, to support them under their great necessities; and this liberal supply or collection, made by the Christians in Antioch, was 'sent to the elders' or chief ministers of Judea, 'by the hands of Barnabas and Saul,' whose great care and fidelity herein is here particularly mentioned with honour.

These are the principal passages relating to the life and actions of St. Barnabas, the saint we celebrate this day. For his writings, we find only one epistle written by him, which is generally by the ancients ascribed to him, though some suppose it spurious, because it is not put in the canon of Scripture.

But I may not conclude the life of this saint, without taking some notice of his death, which is supposed to be at Salamis, a city in the island of Cyprus. The manner of it is said to be this: he was set upon by certain Jews that came from Syria, as he was disputing in the synagogue against the obligation and continuance of the rites and sacrifices of Moses's law being all fulfilled in Christ; at which they were so highly incensed, that they seized him in the night, and carried him without the city, where they put him to great tortures, and after stoned him to death.

Thus lived and died this eminent saint and companion of St. Paul, and was buried (as some tell us) by his kinsman Mark, in a cave not far distant from that city.

We have seen some of the singular gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, with which this holy apostle St. Barnabas was endued; and are taught by the Church to pray, that we may not be left destitute of some measure of the said gifts, nor yet of grace, to use them always to God's honour and glory. To which end let us,

1. Endeavour to imitate, in some measure, his exceeding great bounty and liberality, in selling all and giving to the poor, which the rich man in the gospel refused to do, and chose rather to part with his Saviour, than any part of his estate for that purpose; whereas the saint of this day compassionated the necessities of his fellow-Christians, and sent relief to the indigent brethren of Judea, contributing to the wants of the needy, and refreshing the bowels of distressed saints, which should teach us to go and do likewise.

2. Let us imitate his great zeal and diligence in propagating the faith of Christ. We read of Barnabas and Saul's indefatigable industry in travelling up and down, and scattering the light of the gospel in dark and distant regions; which should teach us to spare no pains to rescue men from ignorance and error, and to bring them to the knowledge and understanding of divine truths, turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God; knowing, that he that turneth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save his soul alive, and shine as the stars in the kingdom of heaven.

3. From the disciples being all united in one name, and called Christians first in Antioch, let us learn to unite together in one bond of peace and love. Both Jew and Gentile were then gathered into one flock, and taken into one fold of the Catholic Church; at which time it was thought fit that all former names of distinction should be laid aside, and that they should all have the general name and appellation of Christians, to teach them to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace: and therefore we find St. Paul exhorting the Corinthians, 'by the name of Christ, to speak all the same things, that there might be no divisions among them, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment;' 1 Cor. i. 10, and not only so, but that they should answer the import and obligation of that holy name, which was to believe and practise what Christ had taught them, to follow his example, to cleave to him with full purpose of heart, and to depart from all iniquity.

Lastly, From the contest that happened between St. Paul and Barnabas about the Jewish converts, we may learn, that the best men have their failings, that we all here know but in part, and that differences may arise in lesser matters, even among good men; which should make us bear with one another's infirmities, and avoid as much as possible all contention and strife, longing for that happy time when all these imperfections shall be done away, and we shall be all joined together in one fellow-

ship and communion, singing the praises of our Maker to all eternity: to which blessed state, God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. BARNABAS'S DAY.

JOHN xv. 12—17.—*This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends; ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants,* &c. *but friends,* &c.

THE saint of this day was noted for an example of great love and charity to mankind, one that had his name from it, being called Barnabas, which signifies 'a son of consolation,' from the great comfort and relief he was wont to afford to distressed persons. For which reason the Church selected this portion of Scripture, to be read as the gospel for this day; wherein our love to one another, in all the acts and good offices of it, is recommended to us by the precept and example of our blessed Saviour, beginning with these words:—

'This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.' Where I am to consider, first, the nature of this love; next, the measure of it, and then the command about it.

For the nature of this love, it hath two excellent properties; the one of avoiding all things hurtful; the other of doing all things profitable and beneficial to one another.

1. It is a known property of love, to restrain men from doing the least harm to any; 'Love thinketh no evil,' (saith the apostle,) 1 Cor. xiii. 5; it harbours no evil thoughts, and much less any evil designs against any; 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.' Rom. xiii. 10; it will hurt none in body, goods, or name, offering violence to no man's person, nor rapine to his goods, nor reflections on his name, which are all effects of a rancorous and evil mind, and are far removed from every pious and virtuous soul. Again,

2. Another property of love, is not only to do no evil, but to do all manner of good, to do things profitable and pleasing to one another, and to be ever ready, by all good means, to promote each other's interest and welfare; to be aiding in all difficulties, faithful in all dealings, favourable in all censures, and helpful in all necessities: this is the love we are to bear to one another.

For the measure of it, it is as Christ hath loved us: 'Love one another (saith he) as I have loved you.' Sometimes the love of ourselves is made the measure of our loving others, as the precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' But because men may be sometimes too partial and indulgent to themselves,

and so love themselves too much; and at other times too careless and negligent of themselves, and so love themselves too little, this cannot be always a sure and safe rule or measure to walk by: and therefore we have here a higher and better measure and direction given us in this matter; and that is, 'to love one another, as Christ hath loved us.' His love is ever true, regular, and unfeigned, and such should ours be to one another: not that we can come up to the same pitch and degree of affection with him, or give the same demonstrations of it that he hath shewed to us; none, no not the best of men, can arrive to that perfection: but we are to love with the same sincerity, though not with the same equality, and we are to be as desirous of one another's welfare and salvation, as Christ was of ours, though we cannot do so much for it. Our love must be of the same kind with his, though not to the same degree. To convince us of this,

We have, in the next verse, an instance of the highest degree of affection that man can attain to; for 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' The greatest expression of love we can shew to our dearest friends, is to adventure to die for them; but our Saviour's love to us hath run higher, in laying down his life for his bitterest enemies; 'for when we were enemies (saith the apostle) we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son.' He shed his blood to atone for the guilt of them that shed it; and though it be very difficult for us to attain to so high a degree of affection, yet we must endeavour to imitate it, and to come as near to it as we can.

'And then (saith he) ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you,' and have done before you. Though you have been 'enemies' to me before 'by evil works,' yet if you observe my precept of loving one another, as I have loved you, you shall be reckoned in the number of my friends. Your obedience to my doctrine and precepts will be the best testimony of your love and duty towards me, and that will be the best attractive of my kindness and affection towards you; that will remove all enmity, and beget a firm league of peace and amity between us; it will set you above the rank of servants, and entitle you to all the endearments of friends. So he tells the disciples in the next words, 'Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.' Where we may observe,

1st, The different conditions of servants and friends, and how much the one comes short of the other. And,

2dly, That Christ treats his followers not after the vile rate of servants, but after the more endearing manner of friends. For the

1st, Servants you know are placed in a low and mean condition, in a state of subjection and servitude. And in the ages and times when our Saviour spake these words, their condition

was much worse than now it is; for servants then were generally reputed and used as slaves, they were bought and sold for money, and therefore reckoned amongst the other goods and chattels of their masters, as it is in some places to this day. And still the name of a servant denotes a slavish and degenerate state of body and mind. To this the apostle alludes, in saying, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.' Rom. viii. 5. He that serves, especially a hard master, does all things in fear; and if the master withdraws his eye, he soon withholds his hand: he is scarce a free agent in any thing he does, but all his actions are influenced either by force or fear. Moreover,

The name and condition of a servant imports not only a mean, but mercenary disposition; one that doth nothing for love, but all things for hire or reward, and makes his pay the sole motive and measure of his obedience. He neither loves the person commanding, nor the thing commanded, but is drawn to his duty only from principles of gain or dread; which betokens a sordid, selfish, and servile spirit.

But the main thing mentioned in the text, to show the abject condition of a servant, is the distance he is kept at from his master, together with his ignorance and unacquaintance with his master's actions and designs; 'The servant knoweth not what his lord doth.' A master locks up his mind as well as his treasure from his servant, who is to stand aloof off sometimes from his presence, but always from his counsels: for he that makes his servant his counsellor, sometimes makes him his governor too; and by admitting him too far into his secrets, by degrees makes him his master. Freedom and familiarity ofttimes lessens the master, and puffs up the servant, who thereby becomes insolent and intolerable: and if he lends him too much of his ear, he will repay him with too much of his tongue. A servant therefore must be staved off to a due distance, lest he get ground by too near approaches: he is to know nothing but his master's commands, and in these too not always to know the reason of them, but to yield a ready obedience and submission to them.

This is the nature, and these are the qualifications, that belong to the state and condition of a servant.

But the quality and treatment of a friend is quite different: for,

1. He hath still a freedom and easiness of access; both house, and heart, and hand, are all open for the welcome reception of a friend. He is not kept at a distance like a servant or stranger, but is admitted into the nearest union and closest embraces. We open to men of business with caution and difficulty, but we receive the visits of friends with facility and delight. A friend is often styled another self, having as it were but one soul in two bodies, which cannot but beget the greatest endearments. Again,

2. It is the property of friends to put the best construction upon

the words and actions of each other: 'Love covereth a multitude of sins,' saith the apostle; it will hide a scar when it cannot remove it. Love is never so blind, as in espying faults and failings; and malice is never so quick-sighted as in discerning spots and blemishes: a true friend will rather cast a veil to cover, than expose and discover another's nakedness; he will bury weaknesses in silence, and proclaim merits and virtues on the house-top. In short, true friendship never aggravates, but always excuses the failings of a friend. A wise heathen observed, that all things have two handles, the one good, and the other bad; and that friends always took them by the best, and enemies by the worst handle: and this is a good touchstone to try the truth of friendship.

Indeed, there are few actions so ill, as one hath well observed, but will admit of some extenuation or excuse, either from ignorance or inadvertence, from passion or surprise, from company or temptation, and the like: which may in a great measure excuse, though not wholly justify the action.

Now, a good man will use these apologies and alleviations of faults for the good of his friend; whereas a bad man will aggravate and urge things with rigour, to do another a bad turn: the one proceeds from the favours and fervours of friendship, the other from the frowns and fury of an enemy. In short, a true friend will rather be an advocate to plead for, than take upon him the office of a judge to censure and condemn another; and therefore a proud person can never be a true friend, because he commonly overlooks the merits and worth of others, to magnify his own; nor can backbiters or detractors be safely taken into that relation, for such will blacken others, that themselves may shine the brighter, and blazon their infirmities, to set forth their own excellencies; which is opposite to, and the reverse of, all true friendship.

3. Another property of friends is to sympathize in the joys and sorrows of one another, to 'rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' that is, to bear a part in the afflictions, as well as in the prosperity of each other. And this, as a great man hath observed, will work two excellent but contrary effects; it will double joys, and lessen sorrows: for there is no man that imparteth his joys, but joys the more; and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but grieveth the less: like a burden, which lying upon one man's shoulders, is heavy and hard to be borne, but being parted and lying upon more, becomes light and easy. And every one knows and finds by experience, that sorrows by being communicated grow less, and joys greater.

4. Another act or office of friendship is the imparting of secrets; which ever opens, and many times eases the heart. A secret may be sometimes too big for a single breast, and may require the enlarging and reposing of it in another. Now this can be no where safely lodged but in the bosom of a friend.

A secret is many times too dear and tender a thing to be committed to every breast; neither will a wise man let such things go out of his own bosom, but where he hath another safely to receive it. For which reason it was wisely said, that none should know the secrets of a man's heart, but his God, his conscience, and his friend. Hence 'Abraham was called the friend of God,' James ii. 23; and was treated by him as such, by having his secret counsels communicated to him: 'Shall I hide from Abraham (saith God) what I am about to do?' Gen. xviii. 17; as if it were a breach of friendship to reserve or conceal the knowledge of his designs from him. And God is said to 'speak to Moses, as a man speaketh to his friend,' Exod. xxxiii. 11; meaning, that God admitted him to the same familiarity of address, and to the same freedom of imparting his mind, as we are wont to do to our intimate friends. And this privilege is still continued to God's faithful people; for 'the secret of the Lord (saith the Psalmist,) is with them that fear him.' Psalm xxv. 14. And because we want not only another heart to receive our secrets, but likewise another head in many cases to advise and counsel us; this is therefore reckoned another act and office of a friend, to direct and assist us in all our affairs. This likewise God is said to do for us, by enlightening our minds with the knowledge of the truth, and by being eyes to the blind and understanding to the ignorant; he is called therefore 'the mighty Counsellor.'

Thus we see both the different nature and the different treatment of servants and of friends: the one being of a servile, mercenary, and degenerous temper, are kept at a distance from the master's presence and counsels; the other being received into a higher relation, have a greater freedom of access, are admitted as it were privy-counsellors, and acquainted with the secrets and jewels of the cabinet.

2dly, Now, our Saviour here tells his disciples and followers, that he calls them not servants, nor useth them as such; but he styles and treateth them as friends, not keeping them at a distance as servants use to be, and in ignorance of his counsels and designs, but allowing them free access to him, to come boldly to ask grace and help in time of need; not putting them upon any hard services, nor making any hard constructions of their ways and actions, but making all favourable allowances, and, like a merciful high-priest, having a fellow-feeling of all their infirmities. In short, he tells them, that whereas servants are many times strangers to their master's mind, and 'know not what their master doth,' he, on the contrary, receives his followers as friends and confidants into his bosom: 'For all things that he hath heard of his Father, he makes known unto them.' He communicates to them the knowledge of all things that any way tend to their benefit or comfort, and hides nothing from them that is fitting or necessary for them to know.

But there is one property of Christ's friendship to his followers,

that far exceeds all the friendships of the world; and that is, its constancy and never-failing duration: for 'whom he loveth, he loveth unto the end;' and such as come to him, he will by no means cast off. The friendships of the world are ofttimes founded upon a bad bottom, and so are vain, variable, and uncertain; they are many times taken up by levity, and laid down by humour: but Christ's friendship is like himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' without variableness or shadow of change. He is not like those false counterfeit friends, that will smile upon you to-day, and scarce know you to-morrow: his friendship hath no such hollowness or unsoundness in it, but is constant and unchangeable, and nothing is able to abate or extinguish his affection; his love is unalterably fixed on his friends, and neither the malice of men nor the rage of devils can pluck the meanest of them out of his bosom.

Now, because the use and benefit of a friend is so vastly great, wise men are wont to use great care and caution in choosing them; for out of their acquaintance they choose familiars, and out of them friends. But Christ here tells his disciples, 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you;' meaning, that he prevented them with his loving-kindness, and was a better friend to them than they were to themselves: for though they had neither judgment nor inclination to seek his friendship, yet he, of his own accord, selected them for his friends, and treated them with all the endearments belonging to that relation. His love to them was free and undeserved, having, of his own good-will, made choice of them for his friends and favourites; and that, not only for their own benefit and advantage, but to promote the good of others.

For 'I have ordained you (saith he) that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:' that is, he appointed his disciples to go abroad into all the world, to abound in good works, and to bring in a harvest of converts to his faith and religion; which good fruits would remain with them, and redound both to God's glory and their own. Of which they should have this benefit at present, to have all their prayers heard, and all their wants supplied, for which they address unto God in his name; that 'whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, (saith he,) he may give it to you.'

This is the sum of the gospel for this day, which contains the great christian duty of 'loving one another, as Christ also hath loved us;' recommended to us by the example of Barnabas, the saint of this day, who was an eminent pattern of this divine grace. By this we shall make Christ our friend, who is the best friend and benefactor in the world: 'Ye are my friends, (saith he,) if ye do what I command you.' And the principal command he lays upon his followers, to cement his and their hearts together, is the loving of one another. To this he hath given us many precepts, and shewed himself the best pattern; for he

condescended to be a man, merely to be a friend, and took upon him our flesh, that he might have the tenderness and compassions of our human nature; and, in a word, that he might have our hearts, and we his.

Wherefore let us labour and pray for this excellent grace, that God would plant the love of himself and our neighbour in our hearts, that it may grow up and appear in all our actions; so shall we partake of his love here, and for ever abide in it hereafter.

DISCOURSE CCLXX.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

ISAIAH xl. 1—12.—*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,* &c. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of God shall be revealed,* &c.

WE are this day to celebrate the memory of St. John the Baptist, who was the harbinger and forerunner of our Saviour; of whom the collect for the day observes,—

1st, His 'wonderful birth:' and,—

2dly, The great business or errand upon which he was sent; which was to 'prepare the way of the Lord, by preaching of repentance.' And from both it teaches us to pray for grace to 'follow his doctrine, by truly repenting according to his preaching;' and 'his example, by constantly speaking the truth, boldly rebuking vice, and patiently suffering for the truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

For his birth, that was attended with many extraordinary circumstances. His parents were both aged and childless, his mother Elizabeth 'barren,' and his father Zacharias 'well stricken in years.' And yet his birth was foretold by an angel, which was a wonder too big for Zachary's faith, who was therefore stricken with a miraculous dumbness, till it was made good; at once to confirm his faith, and to punish his infidelity. His conception was miraculous, being, as Isaac was, a child of promise, above and beside the course of nature; he was sanctified and filled with the Holy Ghost even from the womb, in which he leaped for joy at our Saviour's presence three months before he was born, Luke i. 44. But of this, and of the course of his life, and the end of his coming, we have a farther account in the epistle and gospel for this day.

The epistle, of which I am now to treat, begins thus: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God: speak ye comfortably

to Jerusalem,' &c. Where this evangelical prophet (as he is often styled) plainly foretold the glad tidings of the gospel, by the coming of the Messias, and prophetically proclaimed the joy and comfort that would follow thereupon; bringing in God Almighty thus publishing his mind, and bespeaking his prophets to comfort and cheer up his people, that they should not droop or sink under any worldly trouble, but bear them up with joy and gladness, whatever may befall them: 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,' saith he. Where he bids them to double their joys, like that of the apostle, 'Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice.' Phil. iv. And here he doubles and trebles it, saying, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem;' to shew not only the exceeding great need, but the great cause they had of joy upon the comfortable news of a future Messias; and that because thereby 'the warfare of Jerusalem,' by which is meant the church of God, 'is accomplished.' In some translations, it is 'her time is accomplished;' that is, the time fixed for the church's minority, under the strait discipline and pedagogy of the law, is at an end by the freedom and fruition of Christ's spiritual kingdom: by which means 'her iniquity is pardoned,' and the severity of the sufferings due to it is in a great measure over: 'For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins;' not double degrees of punishment, but double measures of mercy; being dealt with not according to the just merits of their sins, but according to the multitude of his tender mercies.

This inestimable favour was promised and prophesied of old, and was alone purchased and procured for us by the Messias, who was to be the sole Mediator between God and man, to make our peace, and to reconcile sinners unto God.

Now because it was highly fit, that so great a person should have some eminent harbinger to go before, to give notice of his coming, and to usher him into the world; therefore God the Father promised to 'send his messenger, who should prepare his way before him.' Mal. iii. 1. And this messenger was John the Baptist, the saint of this day, who is described here by the prophet Isaias, to be 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God;' called therefore *Angelus Domini*, a person ordained of God to be the herald to proclaim the coming of his Son into the world. For which reason he is said to be greater than a prophet, one of whom Elias, the highest of the prophets, was but a type.

Of the fulfilling of these things in the person of St. John, we have an account from all the four evangelists. From St. Matthew iii. 1, 2, &c. 'In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

'In those days,' that is, in the days of Herod, governor of

Judea, and of Tiberius, the Roman emperor, 'came John the Baptist;' so called, not for the corporal washings and ceremonial purifications in use among the Jews, which gave many of their doctors the title of Baptists or Washers; but from John's baptizing the many proselytes that resorted to him in the river Jordan, and consecrating water to the mystical washing away of sin; and chiefly for his having the honour of baptizing our Saviour, which gave him in a more eminent manner the title of 'Baptist.'

Moreover, this John came preaching in the wilderness of Judea; his preaching was the publishing of Christ, and proclaiming the glad tidings of the kingdom of heaven, styled therefore the first gospel-preacher. The place of his preaching was 'in the wilderness of Judea;' so the prophecy of Isaiah here foretold, by calling him 'the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness;' therein resembling Elias, who lived for the most part in the forest of mount Carmel, and was fed by a raven in the wilderness. Accordingly St. John is said to 'be in the desert, until the time of his shewing unto Israel.' God can consecrate a desert into a church, and make religion thrive and become fruitful in a barren wilderness. The doctrine that he preached there, was the doctrine of repentance; 'saying, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' This is the first lesson to be learnt in Christ's school; St. John began with it, to make way for our Saviour, for which reason he is styled his precursor or fore-runner, by proclaiming to the Jews the near approach of the Messias; that he whom they had so long looked for was then nigh at hand, that he was speedily to enter upon his kingdom, and therefore they would do well to break off their sins by repentance, and by reformation of life fit themselves to receive him. St. Mark began his gospel with this same 'voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,' Mark i. 2, 3; and so did both St. Luke and St. John; and all of them from this prophecy of Isaias, which they quote from him as fulfilled in John the Baptist, saying, 'This is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaias, the voice of one crying in the wilderness,' &c.; they all bearing witness of John, as he did of Christ, calling upon the world to make ready for his reception, by leaving their old sinful courses, and turning unto God by newness of life.

Now this preparing the way of the Lord, is the levelling and making straight and plain all places before him, as is wont to be done before the coming of great princes; it is expressed here by Isaias thus: 'Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' All which is to be understood not in a literal, but spiritual sense, according to the nature of Christ's

spiritual kingdom; for this levelling and making straight was not meant of material hills and highways, but of what was high and ambitious, low and base, perverse and crooked in men's lives and actions; all which were to be regulated and set right to entertain this spiritual prince, who was to reign not so much over our bodies as our souls, and to set up his kingdom within our hearts. Pride and vain-glory are the mountains to be brought low; humility and lowliness of mind are the valleys that are to be exalted; deceit and hyprocrisy are the crooked paths that must be made straight; oppression and injustice the rough ways that must be made plain. In a word, every exorbitant lust and affection must be subdued and brought into subjection to the obedience of faith.

This rectifying, smoothing, and levelling our desires, is the 'preparing the way of the Lord, and making his paths straight,' which St. John advised all men to do, to qualify them for the reception of our Saviour, that they might receive benefit and salvation from him; which holy office he performed not by putting them upon any worldly pomp or magnificent shows, which our Saviour wholly declined as altogether unsuitable to the ends of his coming, but by calling upon them, with pure souls and reformed manners, to meet and receive this most holy prince. To which end, St. John was ordered to appear not in feasting, or gorgeous attire, nor in any stately court, or populous city or palace; but in the most rigid fasting, in rough apparel, and in an uncultivated desert. He was sent before to baptize and cleanse the whole nation, and to purge them from their former sins by repentance, that they might become fit to entertain this heavenly king, and be capable of receiving the graces and effusions of his Holy Spirit.

This the prophet Isaiah here foretold, as the best way of 'revealing the glory of the Lord,' to make it visible to all men, 'that all flesh may see it together;' being the way that God himself had ordained; for we are here told, that 'the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.'

But the voice that was ordered to cry, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord,' or make ready for the Messiah's coming in the flesh, was bid to 'cry' again; and being asked, 'What it should cry?' was answered, that 'all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.' That this may leave the deeper impression, the prophet doubles and repeats it again, 'Surely the people is grass, the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord shall stand for ever;' signifying to us, that the Messiah's coming was not for any carnal or secular ends, for all worldly glories and sensual pleasures are fading, transitory, and wither away; but he came for more sublime and spiritual purposes, to shew us the way to heaven, and to bring us to glories that are more permanent and lasting, and will abide for ever.

The former of these cries was uttered by St. John in the wilderness of Judea; the latter by St. Peter, in his first epistle to the scattered brethren; where, in chap. i. 24, 25, alluding to these words of Isaiah, he proclaims 'all flesh to be grass, and all the glory of man to be as the flower of grass: the grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.'

Now all flesh is said to be grass, partly in a literal, but chiefly in a mystical or metaphorical sense.

For the first, all flesh may in some measure, even in a literal sense, be said to be grass; for all the beasts of the field are fed and nourished by grass, which by digestion is turned into the matter and substance of their flesh; and these again, who are but grass converted into flesh, become the food and nourishment of mankind: so that man, upon one or two removes, may even in a literal sense be said to be grass, because his flesh is supplied and recruited by those creatures, whose whole substance is but grass carnified, or by digestion turned into flesh.

But all flesh is chiefly in a figurative or metaphorical sense called and compared to grass, for the instability and perishing nature of it; for as the 'grass in the morning is green and groweth up, but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered;' even so, saith the Psalmist, 'we consume away in thy displeasure, and are afraid at thy wrathful indignation,' Psal. xc. 6, 7. Human flesh is sometimes fat and well-liking, but in a little time sinks, and pines and dies away: 'It is cut down like the grass, and withered even as the green herb,' Psal. xxxvii. 2.

And as all flesh is compared to grass for the withering nature of it, so all the glory and goodliness of man is compared to the flower of the field, for its fading and decay; 'The grass withereth, and the flower thereof fadeth and falleth away:' where, by the glory or goodliness of man, we are to understand all those excellencies or advantages that men are apt to set a high value upon, or to glory in; such as honour, wealth, beauty, strength, and the like; all which are but like so many fading flowers, which soon wither and die away. Honour is but a little vain breath or puff of wind, which soon vanishes and comes to nothing. Riches take to themselves wings, and fly away like an eagle, the swiftest of birds; and if their owners do not, their heirs will surely set them flying. Beauty, composed of the redness of the rose, and paleness of the lily, like them is a very fading flower, which is soon at an end. Strength quickly yields to weakness, and is mastered by every disease; for 'the days of man (saith David) are but as grass, he flourisheth as a flower of the field, but as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more,' Psal. ciii. 15, 16. 'But the word of our God shall stand for ever;' that is, the gospel to be revealed by the Messiah hath a greater stability, and shall endure for ever; he hath the words of eternal life, and though heaven and earth may pass

away, yet not a tittle of his word shall fail; 'And this is the word (saith St. Peter) which by the gospel is preached unto you,' 1 Pet. i. 25.

The prospect or revelation hereof to the prophet Isaiah, made him thus bespeak the Jewish nation, to whom this gospel was to be preached; 'O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God.' Where by Zion and Jerusalem are meant the church of God, which in the Old Testament is often expressed by those names; and here the prophet calls upon that church and people to publish to all the world the glad tidings of a Saviour, and to do it with the greatest courage and confidence, getting upon the highest mountains, and lifting up their voice with the greatest strength, and banishing all doubt and fear, to say unto the cities of Judah, 'Behold your God!' proclaiming his coming as sure and certain, as if he were actually present before them, and they saw him with their own eyes.

'Behold, (saith he,) the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him:' where he represents the Messias as coming like a king with power and great glory, subduing his ghostly enemies with a strong hand and a mighty arm, triumphing over principalities and powers; that is, over sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, by the power of his grace, and conquering death and hell by the power of his resurrection.

'Behold, his reward is with him;' to crown all that come to him with peace, victory, and success here, and with eternal life and glory hereafter. 'And his work is before him,' by his doctrine and miracles, to confound all those that oppose his spiritual kingdom.

Again, the prophet represents him as coming like a shepherd, in the last words, 'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd;' which he did by the heavenly food of his holy word and sacraments. 'He shall gather the lambs with his arm;' which he did by causing the 'young children to be brought to him, taking them in his arms, and blessing them, and saying theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' He shall 'carry them in his bosom,' keeping them safe from evil, and protecting them from all harm.

And, lastly, like a good shepherd, 'he shall gently lead them that are with young;' taking a tender care of teeming and fruit-bearing Christians, that they may not faint or miscarry in well-doing.

This is the sum of the epistle for this day, which contains the prophecy of Isaias, concerning the manner and end of Christ's coming, together with the office and employment of St. John the Baptist about it, who was his harbinger to go before and prepare his way, his herald to proclaim him, and his usher to bring him in and shew him to the world; described here by the 'voice of one

crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord;' which he did with that success, that drew to him many hearers from Jerusalem, Judea, and the regions round about Jordan, where great numbers of proselytes flocked to him, and were 'baptized of him, confessing their sins.' Matt. iii.

To conclude then, let us, as the Church teaches us to pray this day, endeavour to 'follow the directions of his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent, according to his preaching;' and 'after his example let us learn,'—

1. 'Constantly to speak the truth,' without fearing the face or frowns of any. And,—

2. 'Boldly to rebuke vice,' as he did in Herod, and likewise in the Scribes and Pharisees, whom, for their pride and hypocrisy, he styles a generation of vipers, willing them by repentance to flee from the wrath to come.

And, lastly, let us learn by his pattern 'patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;' as he did the cruelty of Herod, at the instigation of Herodias, a vile harlot, to whom he gave the head of this saint, when he knew him to be a good man, and had heard him gladly. But of this see more in the gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

DISCOURSE CCLXXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

LUKE i. 57, to the end.—*Elizabeth's full time came, that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her, and they rejoiced with her: And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child,* &c.

ST. LUKE in this chapter, among other things, gives an account of the wonderful conception and birth of St. John the Baptist, together with the many circumstances that attended both before, in, and after it. He begins with his parents, which were 'Zacharias, a priest of the course of Abia, and Elizabeth descended from one of the daughters of Aaron;' both 'righteous persons, who walked in all the commandments of the Lord blameless.' And both childless; the one being noted for his 'age,' and the other for 'barrenness,' and 'both well stricken in years.'

However, Zachary executing his priestly office before the Lord in the order of his course, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him, standing by him on the right side of the altar of incense; at the sight whereof, Zachary was much 'troubled, and fear fell upon him:' which the angel perceiving, said unto him, 'Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name

John.' Adding withal, that his birth should be a matter of joy and gladness not to them only, but to many others, for 'many should rejoice at his birth;' for he should be a great and eminent person in the sight of God and men, abstaining from 'wine and strong drink,' and 'should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb;' and shall turn many of the children of Israel unto the Lord their God, from whom they have gone astray: and farther, that he should go before the Messias as his harbinger, in the power and spirit of Elias, who was but a type of him, to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Zachary, upon the hearing of this happy news, had not faith enough to believe it, though he much desired it; and therefore said unto the angel, 'Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.' The angel replied, that he was Gabriel, sent from God to bring him these glad tidings. And because he desired a sign to confirm the truth of what he had told him, he should have one, partly to punish his unbelief, and partly to assure him of the accomplishing of his message: for 'behold, (saith the angel,) thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.'

While these things were doing, the people waited for Zachary's coming forth, and wondered why he staid so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak unto them; at which the people marvelled, and concluded that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned unto them, but remained speechless. And when the time of his ministration was over, he went home to his own house; and soon after his wife Elizabeth conceived, which she perceiving, retired and hid herself for five months, partly to avoid the discourses of the people, and partly to take time to be better assured of the miracle. And finding the truth of it, she brake out in blessing and praising God, saying, 'Thus graciously hath the Lord dealt with me, in the days wherein he looked in mercy on me, to take away my reproach among men:' barrenness being reckoned a heavy curse and great reproach among the Jews, as contradicting the great end and design of marriage.

About this time the Blessed Virgin, who was also saluted by the angel Gabriel with the happy news of her miraculous conceiving in her womb the Son of God and the promised Messias, made a visit to her cousin Elizabeth; being directed thereunto by the angel for the confirmation of her faith, saying, 'Behold thy cousin Elizabeth hath also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren; for with God nothing shall be impossible.' At her coming to her, Elizabeth's child leaped in her womb, as it were rejoicing and doing

homage to his Lord before he was born: and as Elizabeth's conception was the forerunner of that of the Virgin Mary's, so was the fruit of her womb the forerunner to that of the blessed Virgin's.

And this will lead me from Elizabeth's conception to her delivery, and the nativity of her son; the main things to be considered in the gospel for this day, which begins thus: 'Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered, and she brought forth a son.' When the usual time of going with child was over, she was well delivered of a son. And when 'her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy to her, they came and rejoiced with her.' The good news of her safe delivery, and the birth of a son, drew her kindred and friends about her, to congratulate the great favour and blessing vouchsafed to her: which in this case they were more than ordinarily concerned to do, this birth being not only a private favour to the parents, but a public blessing to mankind. However, it appears by this, that it was the practice of those days for friends and neighbours to meet and rejoice together upon such occasions; which is what the apostle would have all good Christians to do, to wit, to 'rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' Rom. xii. 15; that is, to participate of the joys and sorrows of one another, and to be affected with the good or evil that befals our brethen, as if it were our own. To condole with them in any trouble or affliction that befals them, is to 'weep with them that weep;' and to congratulate them upon any good or mercy received, is to 'rejoice with them that rejoice:' the benefit whereof is, that by this means we double joys, which by imparting grow greater, and diminish sorrows, which by communicating grow less. So that the custom of neighbours and friends coming together, and rejoicing at the birth and baptism of each other's children, is well enough warranted, and may be safely continued, provided it be done with that modesty, thankfulness and moderation, that becomes so sacred and christian a solemnity.

Soon after the birth, viz. 'on the eighth day, they came to circumcise the child, and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.' Circumcision was the rite of initiation into the Jewish, as baptism is now into the Christian church: that enrolled children then into God's family, and made them heirs of the covenant, wherein God promised to be their God, and they his people. Of that covenant, circumcision was appointed and enjoined by God to Abraham and his posterity, as a sign and seal of those blessings, which all nations should receive in his seed, which was Christ: as we read Gen. xvii. 12, and Gal. iii. 16.

This token of the covenant was again renewed by Joshua, when the Israelites came into the land of Canaan; being omitted for the forty years wherein they sojourned in the wilderness, as

unable to endure the hardship of that painful ceremony: as we read Josh. v. 2.

The time appointed for children's undergoing that ceremony, was the eighth day after the birth, by some called the number of perfection: seven days the mother under the law was reckoned unclean, and the child too by touching her partook something of it; and for that reason, as also for its weakness and inability to endure that painful operation, it was commanded to be done on the eighth day, when the mother was purified, and the child circumcised; for which see Levit. xii. 2, 3. Buxtorf tells us, that the Jews were so punctual and precise for that time, that if any were circumcised before the eighth day, it was accounted void; and if it were done after, it was thought but little better.

The manner of the operation was with a sharp knife cutting off some part of the foreskin of the flesh, to which they presently applied some drying medicines, and so bound up the wound, that in a few days it was perfectly healed. During the action, they were wont to sing the cxxviiith Psalm, both to quiet and to drown the crying of the infant. The signification hereof was, the putting off the sins of the flesh, by mortifying our earthly members, minding us of laying aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

The neglecting of this rite was threatened with a severe punishment, no less than excision or cutting off that soul from his people, for breaking his covenant. Gen. xvii. 12. Hence we read of the Lord's meeting Moses in the way, and seeking to slay him for not circumcising his child; nor was his anger staid till Zipporah took a sharp stone and circumcised him. Exod. iv. 24, 25. Zachary therefore and Elizabeth took a religious care of circumcising their child on the eighth day. At which time some of her neighbours and cousins came, and as godfathers and godmothers presented it for that purpose. And because it was customary for the sureties at the same time to give the name, 'they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.' But 'the mother (perhaps calling to mind, that the angel who brought her the glad tidings of his birth, had likewise assigned the name of the child) answered and said, Not so, but he shall be called John.' To which when some of them objected, and 'said, that there was none of her kindred that was called by that name;' they beckoned and 'made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And he asked for a writing-table, and wrote, saying, His name is John;' being directed by the angel so to call him.

But how could Zacharias, being yet dumb, ask for a writing-table, or say his name is John? Why, this might be done by signs and symbolical representations, whereby many deaf and dumb persons have signified their mind without speech; and his saying, 'His name is John,' was by writing down those words.

Whereupon, it is said, 'they marvelled all:' they were all seized with wonder and astonishment at the many strange pas-

sages that atended this great transaction; especially seeing 'his mouth was immediately opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spake and praised God.' The first use he made of his tongue, after it was restored to him, was in blessing and praising God, acknowledging his goodness in thus giving him a child, and his justice in thus punishing his unbelief. Which things occasioned great 'fear' and reverence 'in all that dwelt round about them,' for 'all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill-country of Judea.' The fame of this birth spread far and near, and filled all the country with talk and amazement about it: for 'all they that had heard these things, laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be?' They all concluded from these presages, that he should be some notable person, and that more than ordinary things should be done by him. From the extraordinary manner of his birth, they guessed that the manner of his life and actions would be much the same; and indeed so it was. His conception and nativity, which were beside the ordinary course of nature, were followed with a way of living, that was beside the common course of human life: for having by the good providence of God escaped the malice and bloody designs of Herod in his infancy, after he was grown up he retired into a wilderness, and there led the strict and mortified life of an anchoret, free from the vicious courses, counsels, and customs of the world, and abstracted from all the baits and allurements of bad conversation.

His garments were not any of that gorgeous attire that is to be found in kings' houses, nor the common raiment made of sheep's-wool, but the skins of beasts, and 'camels' hair' tied about with 'a leathern girdle;' wherein he literally answered the character of Elias, who is described to be 'a hairy man, girt with a leathern girdle about his loins.' 2 Kings i. 8.

His diet was answerable to his garb, for that consisted not of any of the dainties or varieties of a court, nor yet of the common food of ordinary tables, but 'locusts and wild honey,' the coarsest and vilest of all food; the 'locusts' being either grasshoppers, or, as some think, the tops of herbs or plants; the 'wild honey' was such as the bees had stored up in hollow trees and caverns, without any art or labour to prepare it: both very coarse and sylvestrian fare. Yea, his abstinence was so great, and his food so different from other men, that the Scripture saith of him, that he 'came neither eating nor drinking;' as if he had taken no food at all, or that which was good for nothing.

And as the manner of his life was thus extraordinary, so was his doctrine alike strict and severe. He called all men to a close view and amendment of their ways, as the best preparation for the coming of the Messias; letting them know, that the end of his coming was not about any earthly concerns, as to dispose of crowns and sceptres, or to advance his followers to any of the honours and preferments of this world; but to purchase and

prepare for them much better, to purify their hearts by faith, to guide them by his grace here, and shortly to bring them to glory. For those of the Jews that boasted of their descent from Abraham, he wills them to 'bring forth fruits meet for repentance;' Mat. iii. 7; that is, such as were worthy of the stock from which they would be thought to spring: otherwise it would be in vain to say, 'We have Abraham to our father,' without doing the 'works of Abraham; for God was able of the stones to raise up children to Abraham.' ver. 8.

Moreover, he tells them, that the Messias was coming like a husbandman with 'a fan in his hand, thoroughly to purge the floor' of his church, 'gathering' the good seed of Abraham like 'wheat into his garner, and burning up' the spurious brood of boasters like 'chaff with unquenchable fire.' ver. 12. And that he would make quick work, 'laying the axe to the root of the tree, cutting down all that brought forth no good fruit, and casting them into the fire.' ver. 10. And therefore he exhorted them by repentance and reformation of life to 'flee from the wrath to come.' This was the manner of his doctrine, which was attended with good success; for his free and resolute preaching, joined with a great strictness and severity of life, gained him many proselytes: for 'there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the regions round about Jordan, to be baptized of him.' Persons of all ranks and orders, of all sects and opinions, Pharisees and Sadducees, publicans and soldiers; all whose vices he impartially condemned, and pressed upon them the duties of their several places and relations.

Thus we see what manner of child this was, as to his person, his life, and his doctrine, which were all extraordinary; for 'the hand of the Lord was with him,' to bless and prosper his undertaking.

Upon the whole, we find our blessed Saviour giving him the highest character that was ever given to any person; saying, Matt. xi. 11, that 'among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist;' being honoured with more signal revelations than any of the other. And though our Saviour adds in the same place, that 'he that is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than he,' because he should see the accomplishment of that salvation, which St. John only saw in the figure and prophecy; yet none ever exceeded him in the eminence of his sanctity, or the dignity of his office; for his hallowed tongue first proclaimed our Saviour to the world, and his holy hands baptized him.

This was that holy child that was promised and given to Zacharias and Elizabeth in their old age; and though Zachary, for not believing the angel's first report, was deprived of speech till the fulfilling it, yet when upon the accomplishment of it his speech was restored, he used it in praising God for the signal mercy and blessing bestowed on him. For we read that 'his

father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people,' &c. meaning, that Zachary, by an especial impulse or motion of the Holy Spirit coming upon him, brake forth and sang the following hymn, 'Blessed be the Lord God,' &c. which hymn, known by the name of the *Benedictus*, being explained at large in the morning service, after the second lesson, I shall refer the reader to it.

After this, we read in the close of this gospel, that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel;' that is, John increased in stature, and had the gifts and graces of the Spirit multiplied upon him, and daily more and more shewing in him; remaining in the wilderness till the time of his preaching, and entering upon the execution of his office.

This is a brief account of the gospel for this day, which contains a short relation of the birth, life, and doctrine of that great saint, John the Baptist, who was committed to prison, and there beheaded, or rather butchered, by the command of Herod, for his freedom in reproving his adultery and incestuous embraces of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. But of this, see more in the gospel for the Fourth Sunday in Advent.

DISCOURSE CCLXXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. PETER'S DAY.

ACTS xii. 1—12.—*About that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church, and he killed James the brother of John with the sword; and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also,* &c.

WE are this day to consider the life and death of the great apostle St. Peter, who was born in Bethsaida, a town in Galilee. At his circumcision he was named Simon; afterwards he was by our Saviour called Cephas, which in the Syriac tongue signifies a stone or rock, in the Greek Πέτρος, from whence he was called Peter.

His father Jonah was a fisherman in Bethsaida, who bred up him and his brother Andrew to his own trade of fishing; which they both followed, till our Saviour passing by that way, called them from their nets to be followers of him; telling them that from henceforth, instead of catching of fish, they should catch men. To this Peter was encouraged by a miraculous draught of fish, at a time when he neither did nor could well expect any; for our Saviour 'entering into his ship,' where after he had taught the people awhile, he commanded him to 'launch out into the deep, and to let down their nets for a draught;' Peter discouraged by

the bad success of the night before, thought it would be but lost labour, saying to him, 'Master, we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing, nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net;' which being done, they immediately inclosed such a 'great multitude of fishes, that their nets brake; and they beckoned to their partners that were in another ship, to come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.'

At the sight of this miracle, Peter was struck with such an awe and dread of his divine power, that he was not able to bear the glory of his presence; and therefore falling down at Jesus's feet, said unto him, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord:' for he, and all that were with him, were astonished at the draught of the fishes they had taken. But our Lord, to rid them of their fear, and to raise their spirits, said unto Simon, 'Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men;' meaning, that he had other and higher work for them, and from taking of fish he would make them fishers of men; and that this great draught of fishes which they had seen, was a token or emblem of those great shoals of converts they should bring into the church: which we find verified by St. Peter, who, by one sermon, converted three thousand souls. Acts ii. 41.

But the success of St. Peter's preaching and doctrine will fall in more properly in considering the gospel for this day.

The epistle for the day, of which we are now to treat, leads us to the scene of St. Peter's sufferings, together with the happy end and issue of them.

It begins with these words, 'About that time, Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.' 'About that time,' that is, about the latter end of Caligula's reign, in the year 43, when St. Peter had visited his new-planted churches, and returned to Jerusalem; then did Herod the king, surnamed Agrippa, who was grandchild to Herod the Great, and so took his name, having obtained the kingdom, stretch forth his hands to persecute the Christians, and especially the apostles, that were at Jerusalem; not so much out of zeal to religion, as to ingratiate himself with the Jews, who he knew mortally hated them. In that persecution 'he killed James the brother of John with the sword,' styled the brother of John, and son of Zebedee, to distinguish him from James the son of Alpheus, the one being called James the Great, and the other the Less. Him, for his bold reproving the Jews, and earnest contending for the doctrine of Christ, he commanded to be apprehended and cast into prison, where in a little time he passed sentence of death upon him, and ordered him to be beheaded.

'And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.' Finding the sacrificing of this apostle to be so grateful to them, he went on to gratify them with farther acts of cruelty, and proceeded to apprehend Peter also; the time

whereof is likewise noted, which was at the time of the Passover, signified in these words, 'Then were the days of unleavened bread;' which lasted about eight days, during which time they respited the execution of the sentence against St. James, out of reverence to that great feast.

'When he had apprehended Peter, he put him in prison also, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him;' that is, to sixteen soldiers to guard him, to prevent any escape or rescue; 'intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people,' and if they desired it, to put him to death also. By which we see, that the best of men are not secure from the rage and malice of persecutors;' so true is that of the apostle, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution;' and 'through many tribulations we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven.'

'Peter therefore was kept in prison,' not only guarded with soldiers, but bound in chains to secure his confinement. 'But prayer was made without ceasing, of the church, unto God for him.' The good Christians of those times were instant and importunate with God, in prayer for the life and safety of this great apostle. By this example we are taught to make frequent and earnest intercessions with God for the deliverance of Christ's persecuted saints and members, that are in any durance or distress. This the sympathy that is, or ought to be, between the members of Christ's mystical body, obliges them all to do, to look upon and commiserate each other's condition as their own, and to beg relief and assistance of God accordingly. 'Remember them that are in bonds (saith the apostle), as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.' Heb. xiii. 3. Hence our Church teaches us to pray for all prisoners and captives, as the Christians here did for St. Peter under his sore imprisonment.

But what was the issue of the church's prayers in the behalf of St. Peter? Why, the night before his intended execution, God sent an angel from heaven to release him out of prison, and thereby prevented their wicked purpose against him; the manner whereof, the following words declare.

'When Herod would have brought him forth to the people, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison.' Peter was found fast asleep, when the angel came to release him: a good conscience can give rest in the midst of enemies and the greatest dangers, for God is their keeper, who watches over them, and 'giveth his beloved sleep.' 'A good man (saith Solomon) is satisfied from himself;' his mind is at quiet, and no chains or imprisonment can disturb his rest. While Peter was thus taking his rest, in the midst of soldiers and keepers, 'Behold, the angel of the Lord came unto him, and a light shined in the prison,' which dispelled the darkness of the dungeon; and 'he smote Peter on the side,' not to annoy, but to awake him and raise him

up, 'saying to him, Arise up quickly;' which he accordingly did, 'and the chains immediately fell off his hands' of their own accord.

And the angel farther 'said unto him, Gird thyself and bind on thy sandals, cast thy garments about thee, and follow me;' that is, make thyself ready to go immediately out of this place, put on thy garments and shoes, and be prepared to follow me. Which things Peter did, as the angel ordered him; and when all things were ready, the angel by an act of the divine power opened the prison door, and 'went out, and Peter followed him.' But Peter all this while being in a kind of trance, took not this for a thing really done, but for a dream or phantasm; for 'he wist not that it was true, which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.' However, 'when they had passed the first and second ward,' which were in the suburbs, 'they came unto the iron-gate, that leadeth into the city; and that opened to them of its own accord.' And now being out of prison, and entered within the city, the angel passed on through one street with him, and then departed from him, leaving him to enjoy and improve his liberty.

By this time Peter came to himself, and perceived that it was no vision, but a reality, that had happened unto him: for 'now I know of a surety (saith he) that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews;' who both desired and designed to put him to death. Such wonderful care doth God Almighty take, to preserve and protect those whom he employs in his service.

But though the epistle for the day ends here, yet because the story here related continues farther, I shall briefly pursue it to the end of the chapter.

Peter, we see, by the miraculous counsel and conduct of an angel, is got safe out of prison; and, having gained his liberty, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together, praying for him. Whilst they were performing that office for him, Peter came and knocked at the door of the gate; where a damsel named Rhoda, who knew Peter's voice, ran to the door, and hearkening, and perceiving that it was he, went in immediately without opening the door, and told them the joyful news that Peter was at the door, standing before the gate. They within thinking him to be in prison, and knowing nothing of his release, believed her not, and said unto her, 'Thou art mad;' taking it for an effect either of love, or fear, or frenzy. But she persisting in it, and constantly affirming it was he, they concluded it might be some messenger sent from him, with some tidings to the church. But 'Peter continued knocking' till they came forth; and when 'they had opened the door, they saw him, and were astonished.' Peter, finding them transported with joy at the

sight of him, and very forward to publish it, beckoned to them with his hand to hold their peace, lest he should be discovered, and remanded back to prison. And therefore he first briefly related to them the manner of his deliverance, how God had sent an angel to him, to open the prison-doors, and to lead him out from thence. And next, he bids them go and shew these things unto James, the bishop of Jerusalem, and to the brethren and Christians that were there; and then he departed from thence, and went into another place of greater safety.

These things were transacted the night before St. Peter was to be executed; for had he continued in prison, he was the next morning to be brought forth unto the people, and, to please them, to be sent the same way as St. James was a little before. But God released him from their rage, and prevented their intended murder.

But the apostle's escape occasioned a very great uproar and bustle among the keepers; for 'as soon as it was day there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.' The loss of the prisoner put them all at a great loss about it, insomuch that 'when Herod sought for him and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded them to be put to death.' Their lives were taken away instead of his; for the prisoner was saved by the hand of God, and the keepers executed by the hand of Herod.

And he too, for assuming to himself the glory that was due to God only, came likewise to an untimely end, and was eaten up of worms.

What became of St. Peter for some time after his deliverance out of prison, is not certainly known: it is probably thought he was not idle, but went about preaching the gospel in sundry parts of Judea, and other places. However, we have no certain account of him till his coming to Jerusalem, where we find him in the great council of the apostles, assembled there about the Jewish converts, Acts xv. St. Peter pleading there for their exemption from circumcision and other rites of Moses's law, and for laying no unnecessary burdens upon them; which after occasioned no small contests among them.

Among the other peregrinations of St. Peter for the propagating of the christian faith, we read that he came into Britain, and was a great instrument of planting the gospel in these islands, by which means we happily enjoy the light of it to this day. But wherever it was that this apostle employed his time and ministry, certain it is, that about the latter end of Nero's reign he came to Rome, where he found the minds of the people strangely bewitched and hardened against the christian religion, by the subtilty and sorceries of Simon Magus, who, by his magical arts and enchantments, was greatly admired and almost adored among them. Him St. Peter had baffled before at Samaria, and here he encounters him again at Rome, to elude the force of his

charms, and destroy the efficacy of his delusions; for which a fair opportunity then offered itself; for a kinsman of the emperor's being lately dead, Peter, who was famous for raising the dead, was sent for to bring him to life again. At the same time, the admirers of Simon Magus caused him to be called for, for the same purpose; it being agreed between them, that he who could do the feat should be well rewarded, and the other punished for an impostor.

Accordingly, Simon Magus first began with his magical arts and enchantments; at which, the deceased person seemed to move the hand: upon the sight whereof, some that stood by cried out that he was alive, and were ready to fall foul on Peter for opposing such a divine power.

But Peter desired their patience, till he discovered the imposture; telling them, that if Simon were taken from the bed-side, all appearance of life would soon vanish: and being accordingly removed, the body remained dead and destitute of all manner or sign of motion. Whereupon Peter standing at a good distance from the bed, first lifted up his eyes to heaven, and then before them all commanded the dead body in the name of Jesus to arise; which it presently did, speaking and walking about. Upon which the people changed their opinion, and would have stoned the magician to death, had not Peter interceded for his life.

But he, to regain the favour and opinion of the people, promised that at such a time they should see him fly up into heaven. Accordingly, at the time appointed, he mounted the capitol, and thence began his flight: but the artificial wings he had made for that purpose failing him, he fell to the ground, and so bruised himself, that he soon after died.

This is said to be the end of that wretched and unhappy man, whom St. Peter did not long survive; for about that time Nero, out of his implacable enmity to the christian religion, and mortal hatred of the apostles that preached it, commanded Peter and Paul, who were then both at Rome, to be committed to prison, in order to his exercising farther cruelties upon them. In this sad juncture, the Christians in Rome offered up their daily prayers and intercessions for them; withal soliciting Peter to make his escape, and to reserve himself for the farther use and services of the Church. But while he was meditating on these things, he was either by a secret impulse of his own mind, or as some say by a vision or meeting of our Saviour, warned not to shrink from any sufferings in his cause. Whereupon he cheerfully acquiesced in the will of God, and readily submitted to be crucified: only he begged the favour of the officers, that he might not undergo it the ordinary way, but might suffer with his head downward, and his feet upward towards heaven; affirming, that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture wherein his Lord had suffered before him.

Thus we see something of the life and death of this great apostle; by whose example we are taught the great lessons of patience and perseverance in the work of the Lord unto the end, not declining any sufferings in his cause and at his call; knowing, that if we suffer with or for him, we shall also be glorified together; and, by being faithful unto death, we shall ere long receive a crown of life: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. PETER'S DAY.

MATTHEW xvi. 13—20. — *When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets,* &c.

THE epistle for this day gave us some account of the sufferings of St. Peter, and particularly of his imprisonment by Herod, together with his deliverance from it.

The gospel for the day acquaints us with his doctrine, and particularly with the famous confession of his faith in Christ, together with the stability of the christian church founded upon it.

The account hereof begins with the place where our Saviour met his disciples, after he had sent them abroad to publish him to the world, to let them know that the promised Messiah was come, and that he himself was the person foretold and so long expected by them. The place of meeting them was in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi; where he inquires into the success of their message, 'asking them, and saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?' They replied, that the world were divided in their opinions about him; for some took him for John the Baptist, who, though put to death by Herod, was yet supposed by many to be risen again from the dead. Others took him for Elias, that old prophet that was translated up into heaven, and at that time expected to come back again. Others again took him for Jeremias, whom they thought to be alive again; or one of the ancient prophets, of whose return the Jews had some earnest expectations.

Whereupon Christ, to try the faith and constancy of his disciples, lest they should be staggered by such a variety of opinions, puts the same question to them: 'But whom say ye that I am?' Peter, the first and chiefest of the apostles, called therefore 'the mouth of the apostles,' answered and said in the name of the rest, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Our Saviour was so well pleased with his answer, that he immediately pronounced him blessed; saying, 'Blessed art thou,

Simon Barjonah!' and then highly approved and commended his confession; for 'flesh and blood (saith he) hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven;' meaning, that this faith which thou hast now made confession of, is not built upon any human wit or contrivance, nor to be learnt by any human means or testimonies, but is altogether divine, and can be attained only by the solemn attestations and revelations from heaven. And because thou hast so freely 'confessed me before men, I also will confess thee before my Father which is in heaven.' And therefore 'I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' These words have an elegance in the original by the affinity of the word Πέτρος, the name of Peter, and πέτρα, which signifies a rock: Σὺ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ οἰκοδομήσω τὴν μοῦ ἐκκλησίαν: which elegance or paranomasy is lost in the translation, the English words not having the same affinity either in sound or syllables. However, they are rightly enough rendered, 'Thou art Peter,' which signifies a stone or a rock; and as thy name is, so shalt thou be, for 'upon this rock I will build my church;' meaning, that he should be a principal part or stone in the building of it, which he would build so firmly, that 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Beside which, 'I will give unto thee (saith our Saviour) the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.' This is commonly styled 'the power of the keys;' which implies a spiritual authority of opening and shutting the doors of the Church, excluding obstinate and impenitent offenders, and admitting penitent and returning sinners, expressed here by binding and loosing; and what is thus regularly done here on earth, will be ratified and confirmed in heaven.

Now, though these things tend much to exalt the honour of St. Peter, to whom our Saviour here addressed his speech; and who, being first called to the apostleship, may be well enough allowed a primacy of order and dignity above the rest: yet we may not think any thing herein to be personal or peculiar to him, beside or above the other apostles. For St. Peter herein was only the spokesman or mouth of the rest, who all assented to it, and were as ready to make the same confession: yea, we find some were before and fuller in it that he; for Nathaniel at his first coming to Christ said unto him, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.' John i. 49. And though St. Peter be here styled a rock, yet the rest are in other places called the foundation and pillars of the Christian church. Gal. ii. 9. And Rev. xxi. 14, the 'twelve apostles' are styled 'the twelve foundations, upon which the walls of the new Jerusalem stand.' Neither was the power of the keys committed to St. Peter only, but to him jointly and equally

with all the rest, as may be seen, Matt. xviii. 18, and John xx. 21, 23.

But the main thing here intended by our Saviour, is to set forth the strength and stability of his church, which he hath built so firmly upon a rock, that no earthly or infernal powers shall undermine or overturn it; 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Where by the Church we understand not the material temple, or place of Divine worship, which is in Scripture often called the church; nor by building it is meant the laying together of stones and other materials, necessary to the raising of such a structure, which is the common notion of building. But by the Church here is meant, the sacred society of christian people, called out of the world to be united to Christ as the head, and to one another as members.

This St. Peter styles 'a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, shewing forth the praises of him, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.' 1 Pet. ii. 9. By the building of this church, is meant the settling or establishing such a sacred society, for the honour of Christ, and the salvation of his people.

This is the Church whose indefectible duration is here so plainly asserted; the strength and stability whereof is here confirmed by three good arguments.

The 1st is taken from the greatness of the founder or builder of it, which is Christ himself, God blessed for ever; in those words, 'I will build my Church.'

The 2d is taken from the firmness of the foundation, which is upon a rock; 'Upon this rock I will build my Church.'

The 3d is taken from a promise of its preservation from all enemies and opposers whatever; 'For the gates of hell (saith he) shall not prevail against it.' I shall speak something to each of these, the better to build us up in this most holy faith. And,

1st, The strength and stability of the Church may be proved from the greatness of the founder and builder of it, who is Christ himself; 'I will build my Church.' The continuance as well as the contrivance of any building depends much upon the wisdom of the architect: he that hath strength and skill commonly builds firm; and consequently God, who hath all power in heaven and earth, can give solidity and permanence to the works of his hand. Indeed no human art or strength can build a house that shall last for ever; such a work exceeds the power of all finite and natural agents; but an infinite power and wisdom can build for eternity, and as easily support his Church for ever, as for one moment. All earthly tabernacles must and will be dissolved, for they consist of such mouldering materials, as naturally incline to dissolution and decay; but the apostle tells us of a 'building of God, a house not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.' 2 Cor. v. 1. Such a structure as this is the Church of Christ, which he hath ordered and established for ever, called therefore 'the city

of the living God,' and such 'a city as hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' Hence we find the apostle arguing from God's power and goodness, to the firmness and stability of his Church, and every member of it, 'Who shall be holden up (saith he): for God is able to make them stand.' Rom. xiv. 4.

This sacred society was erected for the honour of our Saviour, and will therefore be continued for a lasting monument of his praise and glory. The faith professed in it, is said to be an incorruptible seed; the love that cements it is everlasting, and never fails; the business performed in it, which is blessing and praising of God, will have no end; it begins here on earth, and will be continued and completed in heaven. It is Christ then that builds the Church, which being designed for his own house or mansion, he will make it firm, and give it a permanence co-eval with himself; having styled it his own body, he will keep it from decay, and not suffer his Holy One to see corruption.

2dly, The strength and stability of the Church is here farther proved from the firmness of the foundation upon which it stands, being founded on a rock; 'Upon this rock I will build my Church.' A house built on a rock is secure from the greatest concussions of wind and weather; for 'the rains may descend, the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon that house, and it will not fall, because it is founded on a rock.' Matt. vii. 25.

Such a foundation hath the Church of Christ, which is not built upon the sand of error and falsehood, which would make it liable to sinking, and fall with every tempest; but on a rock of truth and righteousness, that is solid and unmoveable, and able to endure the roughest storm.

But what is that rock upon which Christ is here said to build his Church? Why, the church of Rome would have it to be St. Peter; and Bellarmine labours hard to build the pope's supremacy and infallibility upon this rock, as St. Peter's successor. But neither the words of Christ in this place, nor in any other part of holy Scripture, give the least favour or countenance to such an interpretation: for our Saviour does not say, Thou art Peter, and upon thee Peter I will build my Church; which he would have said, if he had meant it of the person of St. Peter; but the word is varied, 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church:' which shews, that he meant something different and distinct from St. Peter's person; namely, the faith and profession he had just before made; and so it is generally understood and expounded by the ancient Fathers.

Neither doth St. Paul's saying, 'The Church is built upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles,' Eph. ii. 20, make any more for St. Peter than any other of the apostles, who are all equally styled pillars and foundations of the Christian Church.

Beside, though St. Peter was an eminent instrument in the

beginning and building of the Church; yet he had those personal failings, that must have endangered the whole fabric, if it had no better foundation: for he who so freely confessed Christ, did after as foully deny him; and the Church must have long since failed and perished with him, if it had been built on his person, there being nothing of his successor implied or expressed.

Briefly then, it is not the person, but the faith and confession of St. Peter, that is here, for the soundness and solidity of it, metaphorically styled a rock; being the great fundamental truth of the Christian religion, and that upon which all the hopes and expectations of Christians are founded. So that, to speak properly, Jesus Christ, or a belief in him as the Son of God, is in Scripture made the sole foundation of the Christian Church. This was promised and foretold of him in the Old Testament: 'Behold (saith God) I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation;' Isa. xxviii. 16; which in the New Testament is applied to Christ, as fulfilled in him; for he is said to be 'the chief corner-stone, elect and precious, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple unto the Lord:' and 'other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ.' 1 Cor. iii. 11. Which shews the strength and stability of the Church, Jesus Christ being both the founder and foundation of it, called therefore 'the Rock of our Salvation,' and 'the Rock of Ages;' to signify, that he hath built his church on a rock, which will stand and preserve it through all ages. And this will lead to the—

Last argument in the text, taken from God's promise of its preservation, in those words, 'The gates of hell shall not prevail against it:' where, by 'the gates of hell,' we may understand either the power of death and the grave, or the power of the devil and his instruments; neither of which singly, nor the combined forces of both together, shall ever be able to destroy or undermine the Church: for God promised, in the Old Testament, to keep his vineyard from the incursions of the wild boar of the forest that would destroy it, and from the subtlety of the little foxes that would undermine it, and that no weapon of power or policy formed against it should prosper.

In the New Testament Christ promises to 'be with his Church to the end of the world;' Matt. xxviii. 20; and the apostle tells us, 'He will never leave it nor forsake it.' Heb. xiii. 5. Now He is faithful that hath promised, and hath in all ages made it good by the many signal deliverances of his Church in times of greatest dangers and persecutions. Indeed if we consider the near and dear relation that Christ bears to his Church, which he calls his body, his spouse, his dearly beloved, we may be well assured he will not let it fall; yea, if we consider the price he gave for it, having purchased it with his own most precious blood, we may well think he will not easily lose or part with what cost him so dear. To which if we add the covenant that God has entered into with his Church,

of his being their God, and they his people, we may safely conclude he will stand by it, and keep it from ruin.

Thus we see something of the strength and stability of the Christian Church, from the greatness of the founder, the firmness of the foundation, and the ample security which the promise and providence of God have given to it. To which if we add, how much the honour and glory of God is concerned in the preservation of his Church, we may safely depend upon it, 'that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.' To conclude then this discourse, we may learn from it the following lessons:

1. From the high commendation here given of St. Peter's faith and confession, let us learn firmly to adhere to it, and to be ever ready to make the like profession of it, as occasion shall require. Our Saviour hath told us, that 'if we confess him before men, he will own and confess us before his Father in heaven;' but if we deny him or his truths here, he will for ever deny and disown us hereafter, which should make us beware of ever shrinking or revolting from him.

2. From the firmness and stability of the Church, we may learn the great folly and danger of plotting or conspiring against it: for God Almighty having taken the Church into his care and protection, to attempt against it, is to be found fighters against God, which none ever did and prospered. The Psalmist represents all the enemies and contrivers against the Church, as persons that only 'imagine a vain thing, and form mischievous devices, which they are not able to perform;' shewing the Almighty 'sitting in the heavens, and laughing them to scorn,' and having their goodliest projects 'in derision:' Psal. ii. and Psal. xxi; for 'there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel: and if the powers of hell cannot prevail, we need not fear what any earthly powers can do against us.

3. This discourse may serve to comfort all the mourners in Sion, against those that bear an evil will to it: for though the walls may be shaken, yet 'the foundation of it standeth sure, the Lord knoweth who are his.' God may sometimes use the wicked as a rod to correct his people, but he will not take away his loving-kindness from them, nor suffer his truth to fail; he hath undertaken their defence, and none shall pluck them out of his hands. Wherefore,

Lastly, Let us commit the care of the Church to him that careth for it, and rely upon the divine providence for its security and protection in the greatest extremities; not betaking ourselves to any wrong means for our safety, but committing ourselves unto God in well-doing, which will be our greatest safety. In a word, let us continue steadfast in the faith of Christ, and as immovable as the rock upon which it is founded, and then our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

DISCOURSE CCLXXIV.

ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE'S DAY.

MATT. xvi. 24.—*Then said Jesus to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

THE saint we commemorate this day, is St. James the apostle, the son of Alpheus, called James the Less, to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee, surnamed the Great.

The collect for the day minds us of this holy apostle's 'leaving his father, and all that he had, and his being, without delay, obedient to the call of Jesus Christ, by following him;' and from thence teaches us to pray, 'that we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow his holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

By this example we are taught the great lesson of self-denial, and bearing the cross, of which I shall therefore treat at this time, from these words of our Saviour, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself,' &c. Where we have,—

First, a privilege to be desired and aspired to, 'If any will come after me;' that is, if any will be my disciple.

Secondly, Three great duties or qualifications annexed to it; and they are, (1.) 'Let him deny himself.' (2.) 'Let him take up his cross.' And, (3.) 'Let him follow me.' Of each of which something particularly. And,—

First, Of the great privilege here mentioned and offered by our Saviour, 'If any will come after me;' that is, if they will be my disciples. Masters, we know, are wont to go before the scholars, and disciples use to follow and come after them. Now Christ represents himself here under the notion of a master, leading and teaching his scholars, his disciples following and coming after him for instruction. And this is a high honour and privilege, to be instructed by 'a teacher come from God;' one that spake as never man spake, and did the works that never man did: for hereby we may be secured from error, or learning any thing that is amiss, and be sure of hearing the most useful and the most excellent instructions. We may very well believe what he affirms, trust to what he promises, and obey whatsoever he commands, receiving all our lessons from this divine teacher, not as the words of man, but, as indeed they are, the words of God.

And as it is a great honour to have such a master, so is it a great happiness to learn of him, and to become good proficients in his school; for that will show us to be his true disciples, and make us in a great measure like unto him; which is propounded here as a very desirable privilege, and a thing of which we ought to be highly ambitious. 'If any will come after me;' that is,

if any will be Christians indeed, not only titular or nominal, but real Christians; not like Agrippa, almost, but altogether Christians, which we should all aspire to, if we would willingly be what we profess, the true disciples of Christ, and so come after him here, that we may come to him hereafter; in a word, if we will answer the noble title of a Christian, and receive the reward of Christianity, all which are great, invaluable privileges. What then? why, our Saviour here directs us what to do to attain unto them; and that is, 'to deny ourselves, to take up the cross, and to follow him.'

These are the three great lessons required of all his disciples. The—

First whereof is self-denial, 'Let him deny himself.' This is not only the first, but the hardest lesson in Christ's school, which if we get over and learn well, we shall soon make a good progress in Christianity, and our profiting will appear to all men; but if we fail or falter in this first step, we stumble at the threshold, and shall be able to go no further.

But what is it to 'deny ourselves?' for this seems a strange as well as difficult lesson. Can any thing be nearer or dearer to us than ourselves? Hath not God planted in every man a love of himself, and a care of his own concerns and preservation, and made that the measure of his love and carriage towards others? How then are we commanded to renounce this natural principle of our being, and not only to fall out with, but even to deny our very selves?

In answer to this, we must note, that 'God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions,' Eccl. vii. 29. We came out of God's hands perfect, sound, and pure in all our faculties, having the image of our Maker stamped upon us, which consisted 'in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness;' but we have since corrupted our natures, depraved our faculties, and perverted our ways, 'every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being only evil continually.' By which means we have contracted many vicious habits and inclinations, preferring our own fancies, wills, desires, and interests before the will of God, and the commands of Christ.

Now to deny ourselves, is to renounce all such corrupt habits and inclinations; not to gratify ourselves in any thing, how near and dear soever it may be to us, that stands in opposition against, or comes in competition with our duty to God or our Saviour. But to speak more particularly, to be Christ's disciples, we must,—

1. Deny our natural selves; that is, our reason, will, and affections, when they oppose the revealed truths and will of God. As for our reason, we must stoop that to faith in matters of divine revelation, not suffering it to be too curious in prying into them, but to believe them upon the word and testimony of God, who is truth itself. The mysteries of religion are too sublime

for our weak capacities to comprehend; the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the resurrection of the dead, have depths unfathomable by our shallow reason, and therefore may not be measured or scanned by it; 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,' 1 Cor. ii. 14. Our reason is nonplussed about the most common and obvious things in nature, and therefore must not pretend to judge of higher and spiritual matters; and yet vain man would be wise above that which is written, and reject the mysteries of the gospel, because he cannot fully understand or comprehend them: which is to set up a candle above the sun, and 'to choose darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.' And therefore we must not rely upon, but renounce our own judgment in things that are so far above it, and deny our reason, when it interposes and interferes with divine revelation; believing not what our reason, but God's Word tells us, looking upon it as the greatest reason to believe it, because God hath said it.

Then for our wills; though they were once right, and agreeable with the divine will, yet now they are become crooked and contrary to the will of God, refusing the good, and choosing evil; and therefore we must deny these too, saying in all things as our Saviour did about the bitter cup, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' If Christ denied his own most pure and perfect will, that his Father's will might be accomplished, how much more ought we to deny our own perverse wills, that are so averse to all good, and prone to all evil, that they may be made conformable to the perfect will of God? If we do otherwise, instead of coming after Christ, we run away from him, and move and act quite contrary to him, which is rather to be a foe than follower of him; and therefore to keep us to it, he hath tught us every day to say, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

Lastly, For our affections; these too are become very disorderly and irregular, placed upon wrong objects, and running into undue measures; loving what we should hate, and hating what we should love; desiring what we should detest, and detesting what we should desire; and therefore these too are to be renounced or rectified, denying them all unlawful, and fixing them upon proper objects: yea, and denying ourselves the use even of lawful things, when they are apt to run into inordinacy and excess. This is to deny our natural selves, by restraining our reason in the mysteries of religion, by regulating our wills according to the will of God, and rectifying our affections from all extravagance and disorder.

2. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our sinful and sensual selves. This the apostle expresses, by 'denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,' Tit. ii. 12. A true Christian must not indulge or allow himself in any known sin, but must mortify and

abandon all: not only those to which he may have some aversion, but likewise those to which he may be most inclined. If we observe it, we shall find every man ordinarily hath some darling or beloved vice. David calls it 'his own sin,' and the apostle,' the sin that doth easily beset us;' a sin which a man's thoughts run most upon, and his desires are most eagerly carried out unto, which he takes most pleasure in, and is most of all loth to part with.

Now this sin, whatever it may be, either pride or covetousness, malice or uncleanness, luxury or drunkenness, or whatever else it is, must be totally renounced and relinquished by us, if we mean to be Christ's disciples; otherwise he will never own us for his, if we allow or indulge ourselves in any known sin, for it is that sin, and not Christ, that is master; and therefore we must part with that or our Saviour, for we cannot serve two masters, but must either deny ourselves or him.

3. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our worldly selves; that is, all earthly possessions, relations, and even life itself, at his call, and in his cause. We must be ready to quit all the profits and pleasures of this world, when they interfere with the love, or come into competition with the glory of God; for 'if any so love the world,' as rather to leave Christ than his estate, 'the love of the Father is not in him,' 1 John ii. 15. Yea, we must forsake father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and all the nearest and dearest things in the world, and undergo the greatest hardships that any can put upon us, rather than forsake Christ, or do any thing that is offensive to him; for 'he that loveth father or mother,' or any other relation, 'more than me, (saith our Saviour,) is not worthy of me; and he that forsaketh not all that he hath, and hateth not his own life for my sake, cannot be my disciple,' Luke xiv. 26, 27. These may seem hard sayings, but they are grounded upon good reason, and attended with a great reward; for he is not worthy to be Christ's disciple, that doth not prefer him above all other things; and he that parts with any thing for his sake, shall receive more than a thousand fold.

4. To be Christ's disciples, we must deny our righteous selves; that is, we must renounce all righteousness of our own, and desire to be found only in Christ's righteousness. Our own righteousness is attended with many failings and imperfections, yea, such as will rather condemn than justify us before God. The prophet Isaiah styles our best righteousness but 'filthy rags, and menstruous cloth;' and when we have done our utmost, our Saviour bids us to say, that we are but 'unprofitable servants.' Our holiest performances are mingled and polluted with sin, and are more apt to beget abhorrence, than find acceptance with God; for which reason we are rather to renounce, than rely upon them. This is a great piece of self-denial, for men are naturally so in love with themselves and their own righteousness, that they cannot hear of denying or disclaiming of either; they would

fain be self-sufficient, and not beholden to another for their justification. It was the pride of the Pharisees to aim at justification by the merit of their own works, and they scorned to hear of such a borrowed and beggarly felicity, that came, like an alms, from the bounty of heaven. These, as the apostle tells us, 'being ignorant of Christ's righteousness, and going about to establish their own, submitted not themselves to the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3; whereas the apostle desired to be 'found, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, even the righteousness of God by faith,' Phil. iii. 8, 9. In like manner, though we are to be careful to do good works, and to labour after righteousness to the utmost of our power; yet, when we have done all, we must renounce all worth in them, and rely entirely upon the merits of Christ for our justification. Thus we see the first lesson to be learnt of all Christ's disciples, and that is, to 'deny themselves.' The

Second is, 'To take up the cross;' where by the cross is meant all the troubles, afflictions, and sufferings we may meet with in adhering to Christ and his cause, which we must bear without repining or sinking under them. The way to heaven is not strewed with roses, that yield nothing but sweetness and satisfaction; but set with thorns, that pierce us through with many sorrows; 'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' saith our Saviour, John xvi. 33. As we are men, we shall find many crosses in this world; and as Christians, we must look for many more: 'The world will love its own; but because ye are chosen out of the world, therefore the world hates you.' So that here we must not think of a paradise of pleasure, but a place of pains and sufferings; nor may we expect to be carried up to heaven in fiery chariots, but in fiery trials; for 'through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God,' Acts xiv. 22. So that the sufferings of this life, both inward and outward, in body, goods, or name, are the cross, that we are commanded to take up.

But what is it to take up the cross? Why, not to draw any unnecessary trouble upon us, or wilfully to run ourselves into danger; for we are bid to 'be wise as serpents, as well as harmless as doves;' and 'if we are persecuted in one city, to flee to another.' But the sense is, to decline no necessary duty to God or man, for fear of any danger it may expose us to; but rather to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest sufferings, than to commit the least sin; and to run any hazards rather than omit the smallest duty. If any cross lie in the straight way that leads to life, we are not to leave the narrow path, nor break any enclosures to avoid it, but must patiently take it up and carry it along with us; if, as one hath observed, it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and rather promote than hinder our progress toward heaven.

But here we must not think every trouble we meet with in this world to be the cross of Christ; for some justly suffer for their sins and wilful breaches of the laws of God and man, others suffer for a humour, fancy, or mistaken opinion; and where it is so, it is their own cross, and not the cross of Christ, that lights upon them: 'For what glory is it, (saith St. Peter,) if when ye are buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God: for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.' 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20. We may not court the cross, or draw upon us unnecessary sufferings; for Christ himself prayed, that the bitter cup might pass from him: but we must with him submit to the Divine will, and endure any thing rather than sin against God, or wound our own conscience: 'For this is thankworthy, (saith the apostle,) if a man, for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully.'

This is the 'cross' that St. Paul 'gloried in,' and the rest of the apostles 'rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ.' It is the cause, then, and not barely the suffering that makes the martyr: to suffer in a good cause, is to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings, which is a matter of exceeding great joy: 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, (saith St. Peter,) happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you:' but let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or busy-body in other men's matters; for such sufferings can afford no comfort here, or reward hereafter: 'But if any suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf.' 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14, &c. In short, we must not omit any duty, or commit any sin, for fear of suffering; but be ever ready, not only to do, but to suffer what we can for the glory of God, and the furtherance of the gospel. This is the cross that Christ hath borne before us, and expects his disciples should take up and bear after him. And this will lead to the

Third and last qualification of his disciples, which is to follow him: 'If any will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.' Where to follow Christ, is,—

1. To follow his doctrine. And,—

2. To follow his example; that is, to believe as he hath taught us, and to do as he hath practised.

1. Christ being 'a teacher come from God,' his doctrine must be divine, and consequently infallibly true and certain, and therefore worthy of all acceptation; it is our honour to learn of such a Master, and our happiness to copy after so heavenly a Teacher.

2. And as his doctrine, so his example, too, is worthy of all imitation: for though no mere man was ever fit to be followed in all things, all men being subject to errors and failings, and the

best having vices as well as virtues; yet Christ was so pure and perfect in all his ways, having no sin, nor any guile found in his mouth, that we may safely tread in His steps who never trod awry; we may and ought to receive his doctrine, and in all things follow the example of so unerring a guide: 'Be followers of God, (saith St. Paul,) as dear childen.' Eph. v. 1. 'And be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ.' 1 Cor. xi. 1. He would have them to follow Christ absolutely and in all things, but him no farther than he followed Christ; 'and he that abideth in him, ought so to walk as he walked.' 1 John ii. 6.

To conclude, then, if we will be Christ's disciples or Christians indeed, if we would so come after him here, as to come to him hereafter, let us deny ourselves for him, who so readily denied himself for us, and parted with all that was dear to him for our sake. Let us take up the cross, which he hath so patiently borne before us, and thereby sanctified it to us, and placed it in the way to a never-fading crown. And, lastly, let us follow him in all things wherein he is imitable by us, conforming our lives to the pattern of his most holy life, and to all his carriage towards God and men. And by thus following him in grace here, we shall ere long follow him to glory; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. JAMES'S DAY.

MATTHEW XX. 20—29. — *Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children, with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one at thy right hand, and the other on the left in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask*, &c.

THE epistle for this day being handled, partly in the epistle for St. Barnabas's day, and partly in the epistle for St. Peter's day, I shall, to avoid repetition, refer the reader to both, and proceed to treat at this time of the gospel for this day, which begins thus: 'Then came to him,' that is, to Jesus, 'the mother of Zebedee's children.' When this was, the verses immediately going before declare; it was when 'Jesus was going up to Jerusalem with his twelve disciples,' ver. 17, 18; to whom he discovered, in the way, the time and manner of his death, to prevent their being surprised or seized with sudden trouble, to see him delivered up without any notice; withal telling them, that 'on the third day,' after they had put him to death, 'he should rise again,' ver. 19.

Now, upon the mention of his resurrection, which they supposed to be the time of his being exalted to his kingdom, 'the mother of Zebedee's children came with her sons;' that is, with James and John, two of his disciples; who putting their mother

upon it, came with her to Jesus, worshipping or falling down on her knees to present a petition to him, 'desiring a certain thing of him.' Our Saviour, seeing her in that humble posture, and thinking that she had something to ask, 'said unto her, What wilt thou?' She, prompted, as it is thought, by her two sons, who had too much of ambition in them, 'saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one at thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.' Which request was grounded on those words of our Saviour to his disciples, Matt. xix. 28, 'Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' Where he seems to promise his followers, that as soon as he came to his kingdom, which they supposed to be immediately after his rising again from the dead, they should be highly honoured and advanced by him. The thing there promised seems to refer to the dignity vouchsafed to the sons of Jacob, of being the heads of all the tribes of Israel; among which his two sons, Joseph and Judah, had the first places. In allusion hereunto, the mother of Zebedee's children desires of our Saviour, that her two sons, James and John, who had left all to follow him, might be remembered and promoted to the highest seats of honour in his kingdom, the one at his right hand, the other at his left, in his throne of glory. By which we see, that the very disciples themselves mistook the nature of Christ's kingdom, taking it for a temporal kingdom, or a kingdom of this world, and so dreamt of nothing but golden mountains and great preferments; as appears by that saying of the apostles after his resurrection, 'Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom unto Israel?' Acts i. 6. Which farther shews us the proneness of mankind to ambition, and to aspire too much to worldly greatness. Few can be content with their lower stations, but all are for mounting to places of honour, and climbing above others: the sparks do not more naturally fly upward, than men's minds are for rising and aspiring to great things. Little things are commonly overlooked and despised, yea and counted as nothing; it is only the greater objects that draw the eyes, and fix the desires of the mind upon them. This is evident in these two disciples, whose sight was dazzled with the splendour of worldly greatness, and thereby betrayed into inordinate lusting and longings after it.

But what reply did our Saviour make to the request of the mother, and the ambition of her two sons? Why, such a one as checked the vanity and ambition of both; for 'Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask.' Your desires run after vain things, and are carried out to matters not proper for you to ask, or me to give: it all proceeds from ignorance of the manner of my kingdom, and the end of my coming, for I came rather to suffer than to reign here upon earth; and if you

will be my disciples, you must count more upon crosses and troubles, than upon crowns and sceptres. This hath been my lot here, and will be your portion too, if you will be my followers.

Let me, therefore, ask you another question, saith he; 'Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' that is, instead of an overflowing cup of mirth and joyfulness, can you pledge me in my bitter cup of affliction, and take it off too, as I am about to do, to the very dregs? Can you be plunged over head and ears in the waters of adversity, as I have been in the waters of baptism? and bear those sorrows and sufferings for me, which I have undergone for you? To which they answered, and 'said unto him, We are able.' A bold and confident answer, that shewed too great a presumption upon their own strength!—like St. Peter, who boldly told our Saviour, that though all the world should deny him, yet would not he deny him; though upon the first apprehension of danger, he shamefully denied him three times, with many bitter oaths and execrations. Which should teach us not to rely too much upon our own strength, nor build our confidence on so weak a foundation; but rather to suspect ourselves, to be sensible of our own weakness, and to be daily imploring the Divine blessing and assistance.

But the disciples here seem to make their pretence of patience a motive to their preferment, and urge their magnanimity in suffering to raise them to the greater glories: We are able and ready to suffer, and therefore hope to be advanced.

But Christ gave them such an answer, as served at once to encourage their patience, and to check their ambition; for he said unto them, 'Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.' Ye shall have the honour of suffering with and for me, and of exercising the most difficult and heroical acts of Christianity: 'But to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.' Where he is so far from promising any preferment here in this world, that he bids them prepare for persecutions. He doth not flatter his followers with vain expectations of earthly glories and advantages, but tells them the truth: 'In the world ye shall have persecution, and through many tribulations shall ye enter into the kingdom of heaven.' You shall, saith he, drink of my bitter cup, and be overwhelmed with the waters of the proud, as I have been plunged in the waters of Jordan: you shall be partakers of the troubles and afflictions that befall me, and thereby be made, in some measure, perfect and conformable to my sufferings; by which you shall be no losers, but great gainers in the end. But for any worldly privileges of honour and dignity above others, I have no authority to dispose of them, they being left to the disposal of Divine Providence, and shall be given to those for whom the Father hath designed them.

From whence we may learn to be so far from coveting any earthly honours and advancement, that we should be daily looking and preparing for afflictions, which many times tend to our greater advantage than all worldly prosperity, as the rod sometimes better promotes the scholar's proficiency than fond and kinder usage. 'The disciple (saith our Saviour) is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.' Matt. xiii. 2. 'It is enough for the disciple to be as his master, and the servant as his lord.' And if they deal thus hardly with me, ye cannot in reason expect better usage: for the servant that is under must not look to be above his master, and 'every one that is perfect shall be as his master,' Luke vi. 40; that is, all true disciples of Christ must be content to suffer as their Master hath suffered before them; this is their portion, which will make them, as he was, perfect by suffering. So that Christ, to check the ambition of his disciples, insisted more on the troubles and calamities than the triumphs and glories of this world, to take off their minds from all fond doating upon and admiring of them.

But how did the other apostles take the aspiring humour and ambition of these two disciples, who laboured to get so much above them? Why, not well, to be sure; for the next words tell us, that 'when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.' One man's advancement is commonly an eye-sore to another, and few can willingly see their equals or inferiors to rise above them; for it upbraids to them their own fortunes, and makes them think that as others come on, they themselves go back. Envy, like the sun, darts its hottest beams on the rising ground; and they that seek to rise highest and soonest, are most maligned. There is a vanity in most men to court pre-eminence, and to desire to be uppermost; they are all willing to mount, and cannot endure to see any get above them; which if they do, they either study by all means to pull them down, or by reproaches and calumnies to eclipse the glory and grandeur of their station.

Now our Saviour Christ, to put a stop to this vanity, which he found too predominant in his own disciples, 'called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you.' Where our Saviour does not altogether disallow dominion, nor condemn the exercise of authority among Christians, for that is absolutely necessary to the good government of the world; but he would not have his disciples too much to affect those things, nor follow the custom of heathen princes, who use their authority more for their own grandeur than the people's good. He would not have them domineer over others, nor with 'Diotrephes love to have the pre-eminence;' but to 'be meek and lowly in heart, not minding high things, but condescending to men of low estate. 'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:' that is, affect not power for any secular or sinister ends, to appear to be somebody, and to lift up yourselves above others; but to do good offices, and to administer to the service of the Church.

St. Luke, in relating of this passage, tells us, chap. xxii. 24, that 'there was a strife among the apostles, which of them should be accounted the greatest;' occasioned by the request of Zebedee's wife for her two sons, that they might be looked upon and preferred before the rest.

St. Mark relates it as a petition of the two sons themselves, James and John, who prayed our Saviour 'to grant that they might sit, one at his right hand, and the other at his left, in his glory.' Mark x. 35, 37.

This aspiring humour of these two disciples highly displeased the rest, and begat a great contention among them; which our Saviour perceiving, he sharply rebuked their vanity, telling them, that they being called out of the world, should not affect the pomps and vanities of it, which they had solemnly left and renounced; and that they ought to place their chief honour and dignity, not in commanding, as it is in worldly lordships, but in humbly and faithfully serving for the good and salvation of mankind: which would bring them to greater glory than all earthly desires or designs could advance them to. Herein we shall imitate our Saviour, and follow the example of his great humility; for 'the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' He came not to be waited upon or attended as kings and princes used to be, but to serve and minister to the necessities of his inferiors: and therefore when his disciples contended for greatness and superiority over one another, he puts the question to them, 'Whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.' He took upon him not only the form, but the office and business of a servant, and acquitted himself therein as a true and humble servant; yea, he condescended so far, as to serve us even to the very death, and gave his life a ransom for many. In short, though whilst he was here he was by far the best and greatest man upon earth, yet he carried himself with that meekness, humility, and respect, as if he had been the least. He admired none for their wealth, nor despised any for their poverty; he was no respecter of persons, but poor and rich, that feared God and did righteousness, were alike to him: he affected no titles of honour, nor hunted after power or popular applause, he rather declined than delighted in those things; but he willingly stooped to the meanest services, even to the washing his disciples' feet, and declined nothing wherein he could do good to any, and hath willed us by his example to do likewise; 'Learn of me (saith he) for I am meek and lowly in heart.' So that to insult or domineer, or to usurp any undue authority over others, is to act quite con-

trary to our Saviour, and to be rather Lucifer's than Christ's disciples.

Thus we see the drift and design of the gospel for this day; which is partly to shew the proneness of mankind to ambition, and partly to shew the folly and vanity of it, and partly likewise to direct to the best cure and remedy of it.

The proneness of mankind to ambition may be seen here in the mother of Zebedee's children; who taking Christ's kingdom to be of this world, vainly besought him that her two sons might be preferred in it, the one to the honour of 'sitting at his right hand, the other on his left, in his kingdom.' Neither was this the weakness of the mother only, but the aspiring humour of her two sons James and John: which occasioned a great 'strife among the apostles, which of them should be accounted the greatest.' The like contention is still found among the sons of men, who generally court pre-eminence, and strive to advance themselves above others.

The folly and vanity whereof may be easily seen in the emptiness of the things they so eagerly seek and hunt after: for what is all the glory of the world, but a shadow, a vapour that appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away? What are all titles of honour, but great swelling words of vanity, which have nothing of substance and reality in them, and signify no more to them that are used to them, than it doth to others to be called by their own names? The empty air of applause and the praise of men consists only in the vain breath of the multitude, which is more variable and inconstant than the wind; and he that values himself upon it, lies at the mercy of every reviling tongue, which is able at any time to afflict and discompose him. And as for power and authority over others, of which many are too ambitious, what is it but a matter of trouble and disquiet, accompanied with the loss of liberty and the power over a man's self? And therefore God Almighty, to clip the wings of ambition, sent a message by Jeremiah to Baruch the son of Neriah, who vainly affected these things, in these words; 'Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not, for behold I will bring trouble upon all flesh, saith the Lord.' Jer. xlv. 5.

And our Saviour, to cure this itch of mounting, with which many of his disciples were infected, tells them, that however the men of this world may affect dominion, grasp at power, and exercise authority over others, 'yet it must not be so among them: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth.' Luke xxii. 25, 26.

But to cure this swelling or rising of the mind, our Saviour propounds to them his own example; bidding them to 'learn of him,' not only from his sayings and sermons, but from his doings, to be 'meek and lowly in heart.' For though he was 'equal

with God,' yea, though he was himself 'God blessed for ever;' yet he emptied himself of his glory, and took upon him the nature and infirmities of man: and having done so, he was so far from affecting to be the greatest of men, or lifting up himself above his brethren, that he made himself one of the least, and 'took upon him the form of a servant;' which he did, merely to teach us the lessons of humility and self-abasement. How then can any who call themselves his disciples and followers, swell and look big, and think it beneath them to stoop for the good of their fellow-creatures? Especially since Christ hath made humility the way to honour, and pride to go before a fall; saying, 'He that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.' Matt. xxiii. 12.

Wherefore to draw to a conclusion, let us learn from the gospel for this day to mortify all pride and ambitious aspiring above others, and learn the excellent lessons of humility and lowliness of mind; for 'God resisteth the proud, and giveth his grace only to the humble.' Ambition is a sin hateful to God and man, for both conspire to pull down the high looks of the proud, and to advance the humble and meek; it is often attended with discontent, and never affords the satisfaction it promises. 'Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God,' and then he will either bring you to honour in this world, or in his due time exalt you to far more permanent and everlasting honour in the world to come: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

ACTS v. 12—17.—*By the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*, &c.

THE saint, whose memory we celebrate this day, is St. Bartholomew, who was one of the twelve apostles, and a fellow-labourer with the rest in the work of the gospel.

He is generally believed to be the same person with Nathaniel, and not without good reason; for in the several catalogues of the apostles, reckoned up by the several evangelists, where Bartholomew is mentioned, there Nathaniel is omitted; and where Nathaniel is mentioned, there Bartholomew is omitted: of which no better account can be given, than that it was the same person having two names, and promiscuously called by either. St. John particularly reckons Nathaniel in the number of the apostles, John xxi. 1, 2, who if taken for a distinct person

from St. Bartholomew, would increase the number of the apostles to thirteen. And as St. Matthew joins Philip and Bartholomew together, so St. John still couples Philip and Nathaniel; which plainly shews them to be the same person under different names.

The collect for this day takes notice of God's 'giving grace to this apostle truly to believe and to preach his word;' which he did with great fidelity and success, in the countries of India and Ethiopia, together with the western and northern parts of Asia, where he was a great instrument of rooting out idolatry, and planting the gospel among them. And from thence we are taught to pray, that God would grant to his Church grace, to 'love the word which he believed, and to receive the doctrine which he preached:' by his example firmly adhering to it, and persevering in it even to the end.

The epistle for the day speaks of the many miracles and wonderful works done by St. Bartholomew and the other apostles, for the confirmation of the truths which they delivered. In which epistle therefore I must consider and treat,

First, Of the matter of fact, that many and great miracles and wonderful works were wrought by the apostles among the people.

Secondly, Of the great end and design of them, viz. the confirmation of the gospel.

Thirdly, Of the efficacy and success of them upon the minds of the people. All which things being held forth in the epistle for this day, must be briefly considered. And I begin,

First, With the matter of fact here related; to wit, that 'by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people.' After our Saviour's ascension up into heaven, we read that the apostles were 'endowed with power from on high;' for soon after, upon the day of Pentecost, he showered down upon them the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, to enable them to preach and propagate the Christian faith among all nations. Upon which descent of the Holy Ghost, they were endowed with a divine power of working miracles; for so we read, Acts ii. 43, that quickly upon it 'many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.' Upon their praying to God 'to stretch forth his hands to heal, many signs and wonders were done by the name of Jesus, and they spake the word with boldness.' Acts iv. 30, 31.

Whilst our Saviour was upon earth, he did almost all the miracles himself in his own person, to prove himself the true and only Messias. St. John did no miracle, lest he should draw the eyes of the people upon him, and so their minds should be distracted between them. And when John sent some of his disciples to Christ for their full satisfaction of his Messiahship, he bid them go and tell John what they had seen and heard; 'that the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers

are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them.' Matt. xi. 4, 5. And many believed on him, when they saw the miracles that he did, John ii. 23, and more largely in John x., where he appeals to his miracles, for the truth of his Messiahship.

But upon Christ's ascending up into heaven, and going to his Father, he promised to send his Holy Spirit to his apostles; which should enable them 'not only to do the works that he did, but greater works than those.' John xiv. 12. Accordingly, he poured down his Spirit upon them, by which they were empowered to 'cast out devils, to speak with new tongues, to take up serpents, to drink any deadly thing without hurt, and to recover the sick by laying their hands upon them.' Mark xvi. 17. They made the lame to walk, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak; yea, they struck down some dead, as we read of Ananias and Sapphira in this chapter, and raised others to life. These, and many more signs and wonders, were wrought by the hands of the apostles among the people.

'And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch;' that is, they solemnly met together to preach and do miracles in the entrance of the temple, called Solomon's porch, where the people gathered together to hear their doctrine, and to see the wonderful works done by them. Which things begat such a reverence and dread of the apostles, that the 'rest of the disciples or believers durst not join themselves unto,' or consort with them; for 'all the people magnified' them, and held them in great veneration.

But, Secondly, What was the end or design of those miracles, signs, and wonders, that were done by the hands of the apostles? Why, that was for the confirmation of their doctrine, and the propagation of the gospel preached by them: for the novelty, difficulty, and seeming incredibility of their doctrine, required the greatest and most convincing evidence of its truth and certainty, without which it would have found no acceptance. The minds both of Jews and Gentiles were then possessed with such strong and inveterate prejudices against it, that nothing less than the testimony and authority of God was sufficient to remove them. Now, the only certain evidence of any doctrine's being divine, is the testimony of miracles: for there is nothing that pretends to come from God, can any otherwise appear to do so, but by something that is apparently divine; and there is nothing apparently divine, but what is the miraculous effect of a Divine power; and, consequently, miracles only can attest the divinity of any doctrine. These are as it were the broad seal of heaven, and whatever brings that, or stands confirmed by it, may be rationally supposed and received as coming from God; for none but God can really alter the course of nature, or do any thing above or contrary to the settled order and course of the universe; nor doth he ever do this, but upon weighty and considerable

occasions. He is not wont to work miracles, only to gratify the curiosity of vain persons, and much less to ratify any forged message or commission from him. He often refused to exert his Divine power to any such purposes, saying, 'A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it,' &c. He will not set his seal to a blank, or to any trivial or evil purpose: whatever message or messenger brings these credentials with him, may be well enough looked upon as divine, and worthy of all acceptation. And, upon this account, Nicodemus owned Christ to be a 'teacher come from God, because none could do the works that he did, except God were with him.' John iii.

And for this reason, too, the apostles were endowed with a power of working miracles, to beget the greater credit and veneration to their doctrine. And this was no more than was necessary at that time, when the law of Moses, which was settled by miracles, being to be taken away, I mean as to the ritual and ceremonial part of it, and the gospel dispensation to be established in its room; it was requisite there should be the same, or as great evidence for the taking it away, as there was at the first giving of it; and that the gospel should be as firmly settled and confirmed as ever the law was. Which made the Jews so often ask for signs and wonders to confirm the new revelations of the gospel; which our Saviour did not wholly reject as in itself unreasonable, but their unreasonable way and manner of asking, not from any real desire of satisfaction, but from a design of tempting and entrapping of him, prescribing to him what manner of miracles they would have: for they were not content with the miraculous works done by him upon earth, but would needs have some signs from heaven, such as the thunderings and lightnings that accompanied the giving of the law: not considering that the miraculous cures of Christ and his apostles were far greater instances of a Divine power, and more suitable to the end of their mission and doctrine, than all the thunderclaps on Mount Sinai. And though those terrible signs best suited the severity and rigour of the law, yet their sanative miracles were more agreeable to the grace and mildness of the gospel; the confirming and promoting whereof was one great end of the many signs and wonders wrought by the hands of the apostles.

2. Another end was the subduing the power and subverting the kingdom of Satan. Hence the apostles converting the Gentiles is described by 'turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' Acts xxvi. 18. It is certain the devil had a great power and dominion over the Gentile world at the time of our Saviour's coming; the evil spirits had taken possession of the souls and bodies of many. Hence we read of such a multitude of demoniacs in the gospel, which were persons possessed of the devil, and by him grievously tormented: the providence of God permitting Satan to have the greater

power and liberty at that time, to heighten the glory of dispossessing him, and thereby destroying the force and power of his kingdom; which was done by the signs and wonders wrought by the hands of the apostles, to whom our Saviour, among other things, gave the power of casting out devils. Hence the disciples of Christ were wont to insult over the devil wherever they found him, making him (as one hath observed) to remove his lodgings from possessed persons, by a writ of ejectment in the name of Christ; the mentioning whereof, was wont to make the fiends and evil spirits tremble. By which our Saviour exactly fulfilled the promise made to his disciples, at his departing from them, Mark xvi. 17, 'These signs shall follow them that believe, in my name they shall cast out devils, and do many wonderful works;' which are here said to be wrought by them.

From the end of these signs and wonders, let us consider,—

Thirdly, The efficacy and success of them, what effects they had upon the minds of men: and this, we are here told, was very great; for 'believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.' The miracles wrought by the apostles were so astonishing, and carried that conviction with them, that many embraced the faith preached by them, and fell a-praising God, who gave such gifts unto men. Yea, so strong was their faith in this matter, that 'they brought their sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.' Such confidence had they of the apostles' power of working miraculous cures, that they believed the very shadow of Peter walking by a diseased person was able to heal him; and therefore they put some impotent and infirm persons, that could not stand or go, in the way of the apostles, that as they came by, their shadow at least might come over some of them. Not that there was any inherent virtue in the apostles' bodies, or much less in their shadows or garments; but that God was pleased to add his healing grace and blessing to these things, to encourage and increase their faith in him: the fame whereof spread so far into the country and regions round about, that 'multitudes came out of all cities unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one.'

This is briefly the sense and substance of the epistle for this day, which contains the divine testimony given to confirm the apostles' doctrine; and that was, by the many signs and wonders done by them among the people; which carried that conviction with them, as to proselyte the world to the belief of it. For if any doubted of the truth and divinity of what they delivered, they would soon convince them by raising some dead person to life again, by giving sight to the blind and feet to the lame, and by many other signs and miracles set their faith beyond any just doubt or contradiction; called therefore 'the demonstration of the Spirit and power.'

But because impostors have pretended to and done some things like miracles, to countenance their impostures, and to elude the force of the true, as the magicians imitated the miracles of Moses, and Simon Magus and others aped the miracles of Christ and the apostles; and because Antichrist is said to come with signs and lying wonders, it will be requisite to know how to discern true miracles from the false and counterfeit. And this may be known partly by the manner and circumstances of their operation, and chiefly from the doctrines which they are wrought to confirm.

For the first, true miracles are such as exceed the power of art and nature, and are effected only by a supernatural and divine power; and such were the miracles of Moses and the prophets in the Old Testament, and of Christ and his apostles in the New. Whereas, the false miracles of impostors are done by the illusions of Satan, by sleight of hand, or deception of the eye, or by other magical arts and enchantments: and such were those of the magicians, who were so far out-done by Moses, that they were forced to own the finger of God in his miracles, and the hand of Satan in their own. So likewise the miracles of Christ and his apostles far exceeded, for nature and kind, those of Simon Magus and the false prophets, who did some small things, that made a great show and noise, but none of them ever came near to the miracles of the apostles, who gave sight to those that were born blind, and feet to them that had never walked; yea, and restored the dead to life again.

And as they exceeded all such pretenders in the kind and greatness of their works, so did they in the manner of doing them; for they did them with a word, with a touch, with a look, and sometimes without any means at all, and that not only near at hand, but at the greatest distance.

And whereas the juggles of impostors are commonly done in corners, in the dark, or by false lights; the miracles of the apostles were done openly in the face of the sun, in the view of the world, and in the sight of their very enemies; which have had that wonderful efficacy and success, as to proselyte them to that faith which they before persecuted and despised.

But the main difference between true and false miracles relates to the doctrine or testimony which they are brought to confirm. Those cannot be divine miracles which are done to confirm any false doctrine, or what is contrary to the holy Scriptures, which are the true standard of sound doctrine, and the true rule of judging all pretenders to miracles: for God himself hath charged us, that 'if there arise among us a prophet or dreamer of dreams, and give thee a sign or a wonder, saying, Let us go after other gods, and serve them; thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you will love and serve him with all your heart.' Deut. xiii. 1, 2. By which it appears, that the worshipping

the true God is the standard whereby to judge all pretenders to miracles. So that let signs and wonders be what they will, if they contradict the will of God revealed to us in holy Scripture, we are to look upon them as trials of our faith, and not real miracles.

Wherefore, to conclude, let us firmly adhere to the doctrine of Christ, which is confirmed to us by undoubted miracles; and not be drawn from it by any pretended signs and wonders whatever: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXVII.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY.

JOHN i. 47.—*Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

INSTEAD of the gospel for this day, which is in effect the same with the foregoing gospel on St. James's day, and so needs no farther explication, I shall consider the manner and motive of St. Bartholomew's becoming a disciple of Christ, with the character our Saviour gave of him, and the use we are to make of both. Of which things St. John here gives us some brief account.

For the manner of his coming to be a disciple of Christ, St. John tells us, it was by the advice and direction of Philip; who being himself called to the discipleship, goes and finds out Nathaniel, probably his intimate friend and companion, and supposed to be the same person with Bartholomew under different names, as was before observed. Philip having found him, 'saith unto him, We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph,' (ver. 45,) that is, we have found the Messias. Nathaniel made no objection against the meanness of his original, but only scrupled the place of his birth, saying, 'Can there any good come out of Nazareth?' (ver. 46,) it being proverbial, that 'out of Nazareth ariseth no prophet;' which made him ask the question, how the Messias could come from thence. To which Philip gave no other answer, but 'Come and see;' presuming that if he saw and heard him, he would soon be of another mind.

As he was going, 'Jesus saw him' at some distance 'coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!' meaning, that he was one, that with a true upright heart looked and longed for the coming of the Messias. Upon our Saviour's making this discovery to him of the thoughts of his heart, Nathaniel said unto him, 'Whence knowest thou me?' To which Jesus replied, 'Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee;' withal rehearsing to him many of the former actions and minute circumstances of his life. Whereupon being astonished at his omniscience, and the divinity of his sayings, he breaks out into this confession, 'Rabbi,

thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel.' Jesus, pleased with his confession, told him, that because he believed so heartily upon what he had heard and seen, he should see and 'hear greater things than these;' and from thence yielded himself up, and became one of his disciples.

This is briefly the manner and motive of Nathaniel's coming to Christ, and becoming one of his apostles.

But the main thing I shall now insist upon, is that honourable title or compellation, which our Saviour, knowing his heart, gave at his first coming to him; and that is in these words, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!' Which is a commendation of his sincerity, and recommends to us an upright simplicity and singleness of heart in all our actions. In the words therefore I shall observe the following particulars:—

First, The character of a good man, who is here styled 'an Israelite indeed,' or a Christian indeed.

Secondly, A farther description of him by his integrity, that he is one 'in whom there is no guile.'

Thirdly, The notice or observation we are to take of such a one, implied in the word Behold: 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!' Of each of these briefly. And,—

First, Of the character here given of a good man, to wit, 'an Israelite or Christian indeed.' An Israelite in general is one that is descended from the posterity of Abraham, in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; called therefore 'the heirs of promise, and the peculiar people of God,' dignified and distinguished from others by many high and invaluable privileges. These were the Israelites mentioned by St. Paul, Rom. ix. 4, 5, 'Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.'

The name was more immediately derived from Jacob, who for his wrestling and prevailing with God, had his name changed from Jacob to Israel; because 'as a prince he had power with God, and with men, and had prevailed,' Gen. xxxii. 28. and chap. xxxv. 10. For which reason the twelve tribes which descended from Jacob have been ever since called by the name of Israelites.

But 'they are not all Israel, which are of Israel,' Rom. ix. 6. All that sprang from the stock of Abraham, are not the true seed of Abraham, but they only who tread in the steps of the faith of father Abraham; without which it will be in vain to say, 'We have Abraham to our father,' Matt. iii. 6. Nor were all they that descended from the seed of Jacob the true Israelites, but such only as inherited the virtues, and followed the example of their father Jacob. 'He is not a Jew (saith the apostle) which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision that is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and

circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.' Rom. ii. 23. The privileges of the Israelites belong not to all that are of the stock of Jacob, nor was the promise made to the carnal, but the spiritual seed of Abraham, to believers begotten after the image of his faith; these were the true Israelites, the children of the promise, and the heirs of salvation.

And such a one was Nathaniel, an Israelite indeed; that is, one who was not only outwardly so, by descending from the loins of Jacob, but inwardly so, by embracing the faith of Abraham. And as an Israelite indeed was then the character of a good man, so is that of a Christian indeed the same now; that is, one that is not only in name and profession, but in truth and reality a good Christian; one that heartily receives the doctrine, and readily follows the example of our blessed Saviour, loving him not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth; such a one is a true Israelite, or a Christian indeed. And this is opposed to a nominal or hypocritical Christian, who hath only the show and appearance, but little or nothing of the truth and substance of Christianity. Such are they of whom St. Paul speaks, 2 Tim. iii. 5, 'Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;' that is, taking upon them the style and title of Christians, but doing nothing to answer and fill up that character. St. James speaks of some that 'seem to be religious,' without being really so, and so 'deceive themselves' and others with the empty show of 'a vain religion,' chap. i. 26. The church of Sardis was said to 'have a name to live, but was dead,' Rev. iii. 1; pretending to live like Christians, when they were all the while no better than dead in trespasses and sins; and so, like Agrippa, were but almost Christians, not Christians indeed. In opposition to these, Nathaniel is here said to be an Israelite indeed, by receiving Christ as the Son of God and the King of Israel, and becoming his faithful follower and servant: and they that still do so, may be styled Israelites or Christians indeed; the character here given of a good man. But this character is here farther set forth,—

Secondly, By an account of his sincerity, that he is one 'in whom there is no guile.' This is affirmed here of Nathaniel, upon the account of his earnest looking and longing for the coming of the Messias, and hearty closing with him upon his first appearance; that he laid aside all prejudice and partiality, and was soon satisfied in the divinity of his person and doctrine, calling him 'the Son of God, and the King of Israel.' For which reason, Christ calls him an Israelite indeed, 'in whom was no guile;' meaning, that he was a man of true simplicity and integrity, void of all hypocrisy and deceit.

And this is the character of a truly good and virtuous person, that he doth all things in sincerity and singleness of heart, without any mixture of guile or falsehood.

Now guile in general is a subtlety of invention, or a cunning craftiness whereby men lie in wait to deceive; and of this there are several kinds and degrees; as,—

1st, There is the guile of the heart, which consists in evil thoughts and intentions.

2dly, There is the guile of the head, which consists in plots and evil contrivances.

3dly, There is the guile of the tongue, which consists in false and deceitful speeches. And,—

Lastly, There is the guile of the hand, which consists in fallacious deeds and practices. From all which, as Nathaniel is here said to be free, so neither are they found in a good and upright man. For the—

1st. The guile of the thoughts, and purposes of the heart; of this the holy Scriptures make frequent mention; 'There are many devices in man's heart,' saith Solomon, Prov. xix. 21. 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things, (saith the prophet Jeremy,) and desperately wicked, who can know it?' Jer. xvii. 9. 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,' saith our Saviour, Matt. xv. 19, that is the fountain of corruption, from whence all impieties flow; and therefore God Almighty called upon Jerusalem to 'wash their hearts from wickedness, that evil thoughts might not lodge in them.' David describes a good man to be one of a 'sound and upright heart,' and 'in whose spirit there is no guile,' Psal. xxxii. 2. For himself he tells us, that 'he hated all evil thoughts,' as well as 'every false way,' and walked before God with a faithful and true heart; and every true Nathaniel will labour for purity of intention, and have no guile found in his heart.

2dly. For the guile of the head, consisting in forming of plots and evil designs; that, as it is too frequent among bad men, so is it abhorred by all good Christians. The Psalmist speaks of some in his days, that 'took counsel against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.' Psal. ii. 2, 3. And we read of others, that 'cast their heads together against God, and were confederate against him;' and we have known many in our time, who delight in plots and conspiracies, and take pleasure in projecting and promoting evil. But these are of their father the devil, and his work they do, whilst they study mischief, and contrive or countenance such deeds of darkness; whereas charity thinketh no evil, unless it be to abhor and suppress it, and a good man hath no guile found in his head.

3dly. For the guile of the tongue, consisting of falsehood in words and promises, by speaking one thing and meaning another, that likewise abounds too much in the world; whereby the tongue, which is the glory of man, and was given for the good of mankind, is become the instrument of deceit, and the spring of much evil. David complains of it in his time, Psal. xii. 2, 3,

'They talk vanity every one with his neighbour, they do but flatter with their lips, and dissemble with their double tongue;' by which means 'wickedness is among them, deceit and guile go not out of their streets.' Psal. lv. 11. 'But God shall cut off (saith he) such lying and deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things;' and therefore he cautions all men against this sort of guile, willing them to be true in all their speeches, and faithful in all their promises, saying, 'If any will live long and see happy days, let them keep their tongue from evil, and their mouth that they speak no guile.' Psal. xxxiv. 12, 13. St. Peter recommends this to us by the example of our Saviour, 'who did no sin, nor was any guile found in his mouth.' 1 Pet. ii. 22. This is in our text affirmed of Nathaniel, and is the guise and property of a good man.

Lastly, For the guile or sleight of the hand by evil actions and practices, wherein one thing is done, and another pretended, though it be too common in the world, is yet a vile enormity, to be abhorred of all good men, and is so by every true Nathaniel or Christian indeed, in whom is no guile; and therefore St. Peter wills us to 'lay aside all guile, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking, and with the simplicity of new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.' 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. In short then, sincerity and integrity of mind is the best character and commendation of a good Christian; and that relates to our carriage both to God and man.

1. Sincerity, as it relates to God, consists in the purity of mind and intention in his service, worshipping him from a principle of love and sense of duty, not for any bye-ends of interest or vain-glory; like the Pharisees, who sought more the praise of men than the glory of God, and did all their good works for vanity and ostentation, for which reason they are blamed and branded for their hypocrisy: whereas the sincere Christian serves God for his own sake, admiring his wisdom, extolling his power, and adoring his goodness, serving him not with the lips or the tongue only, but with the heart and soul, doing all things with a pure conscience and faith unfeigned, and obeying all his commandments without partiality and without hypocrisy.

2. Sincerity, as it relates to our carriage towards men, consists in an honest simplicity of mind and manners in all our dealings and conversation with them, not saying or doing any thing contrary to the true sense and intent of our mind, but preserving still a perfect harmony and agreement between our words and actions; not saying one thing and doing another, nor pretending greater love and kindness to any than we really feel. In short, to be sincere is to speak as we think, to act as we speak, to do as we profess, to perform what we promise, and to be inwardly the same that we outwardly appear to be. This is to be a true Nathaniel or Israelite indeed, without fraud, and without guile. From whence I proceed, in the

Last place, to the notice here taken of such by our blessed Saviour, implied in the word 'Behold:' 'Behold an Israelite indeed;' which denotes the excellency and the rarity of such a person, and likewise the notice we are to take of him, which is so to 'behold,' as to imitate and tread in his steps.

For the first, 'Behold' is sometimes taken for a word of wonder, admiring and extolling the person or thing that follows it; such was that of St. John, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;' where he alarms the world with the greatness of the person, and the glory of his message, ushering in both with the term of *Ecce*, Behold. When the Psalmist would set forth the excellency of unity, he doth it by prefixing the same term of admiration, 'Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!' Psalm cxxxiii. In like manner, our Saviour, to honour the person, and publish the praises of Nathaniel, uses the same phrase, 'Behold an Israelite indeed,' &c., signifying it to be a matter worth the regard and consideration of the beholder.

Again, this term 'Behold,' denotes not only the excellency, but the scarceness and rarity of the sight, 'Behold an Israelite indeed;' meaning, that this is not a sight to be seen every day, or everywhere, but what you shall rarely see or meet with. We are not called upon to behold things that are frequent and common, these are wont to pass away without much observation. It is strange and unusual objects that draw the eyes, and call upon us to behold them; and therefore, since the world abounds with persons that are double-tongued and double-hearted, we are bid to behold an Israelite indeed, without guile, and without hypocrisy; a very rare and uncommon, as well as an excellent sight, which we are so to behold, as to love, honour, and imitate.

1. I say, we are so to behold an Israelite indeed, as to love him for his sincerity and uprightness, which are such lovely and amiable qualities, as, while reason and religion remain, cannot but invite and attract the affections.

2. We are so to behold, as to honour and esteem him, entertaining honourable and worthy thoughts of him in our minds, and expressing them outwardly in words and actions, as occasion shall require. But, above all, we are,—

3. So to behold him, as to imitate and follow his good example, by laying aside all guile and hypocrisy, and doing all things in simplicity and singleness of heart. This will recommend us in the sight of God and men, and render all our actions valuable and acceptable unto both.

To attain to this sincerity, let us be ever mindful of God's all-seeing eye, and live always as in his presence, considering that 'all our ways are before him, and he pondereth all our goings;' which will help to keep us tight to our duty, and make us the same within as we appear without.

To which end, let us mortify all ambition and worldly interest, which are apt to corrupt our minds, and misguide our actions. To all which, let us add our devout prayers for the assistance of divine grace, and that will keep us pure and upright before him: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE CCLXXVIII.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE'S DAY.

2 Cor. iv. 1—7. — *Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God,* &c.

The saint whose memory we celebrate this day, is St. Matthew, who from a publican became an apostle, and from an exactor of tribute became an evangelist and an example of righteousness.

He was the son of Alpheus and Mary, sister or kinswoman to the blessed Virgin; born and bred, as it is supposed, at Capernaum, the place of our Saviour's usual residence. He was called also Levi, it being frequent among the Jews for the same person to have several names.

The collect for the day makes mention of God's 'calling him from the receipt of custom to the office of an apostle and evangelist;' and from thence teaches us to pray for 'grace, to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Lord Jesus Christ.' In his call to the apostleship, we may observe,—

I. His diligence and fidelity in the work of the ministry, to which he was called; which is the subject of the epistle: and,—

II. His readiness to obey our Saviour's call to it; which is the subject of the gospel for this day.

I begin at this time with the epistle for the day; which contains St. Matthew's and the other apostles' diligence and fidelity in the work of the ministry, to which they were called. And,—

First, It sets forth their diligence and perseverance in the business of their office without weariness or fainting, in these words: 'Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not.' The illative particle 'therefore,' shews the words to be an inference from what went before. In the foregoing chapter, the apostle had shewed the excellency of Christ's ministry above that of Moses, and how far the dispensation of the gospel excels the economy of the law. This latter (he tells us) was 'the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone,' and delivered by the hand of Moses; which yet was

'so glorious' in the delivery, 'that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, though that glory was but transitory and to be done away.' Whereas the ministry of Christ is a ministration of righteousness, attended with a glory that shall last for ever. The one is the ministration of the 'letter,' that condemns and 'killeth;' the other of 'the spirit, that giveth life.' From thence the apostle argues, 'if the ministration of condemnation be glory, how much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory?' Chap. iii. 7—9.

Having thus shewed the exceeding great excellency of the gospel ministry above the legal dispensation, the apostle acquaints us with the great industry and diligence used by them in preaching and publishing of it. 'Therefore seeing we have this ministry, (saith he,) as we have received mercy, we faint not;' meaning, that having received their commission from Christ to preach the gospel to all nations, and being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation, they cease not to use their utmost endeavours to promote and propagate it. 'As my Father sent me, (saith our Saviour to his apostles,) so send I you,' to instruct and advance the salvation of mankind, teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded them. And having received this charge from Christ's own mouth, they gave all diligence to attend the work and business of it; they did not faint or tire, nor sink under the many difficulties and discouragements they met with in it, but manfully went on in their work with patience and perseverance. By which we are taught the duty of God's ministers, which is, not to grow weary in well-doing, nor to faint under the burden of their calling; but, according to the ability that God hath given, cheerfully to discharge their office, and to perform the hardest tasks of it with courage and constancy. So did St. Paul and the other apostles, who went through many perils by sea and land, to propagate the gospel of Christ; and neither feared nor fainted under any difficulties that happened in the way of their duty and profession. Such was their unwearied diligence in the work of the 'ministry, in which as they received mercy, they fainted not.'

Secondly, The apostle declares not only their diligence, but their fidelity in the discharge of their office; laying aside all guile and hypocrisy, and doing all things in sincerity and singleness of heart. This is expressed here,—

1st, By the 'renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty.'

2dly, By 'not walking in craftiness.'

3dly, By 'not handling the word of God deceitfully:' but,—

4thly, By 'the manifestation of the truth; and thereby commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.'

1st, I say, the apostle declares their fidelity, by their renouncing all the hidden things of dishonesty, by which we are to

understand their shunning all the secret arts of impostors and false teachers. What those are, the Scripture hints to us in sundry places: our Saviour speaks of their coming in sheep's clothing, that is, with soft and smooth pretences, when inwardly they were ravening wolves, that came only to bite and devour. Such were the Pharisees, who 'devoured widows' houses, and for a pretence made long prayers.' Matt. xxiii. 14. And such were they of whom St. Paul speaketh, who 'with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.' Rom. xvi. 18. Of this kind were those 'false apostles and deceitful workers, who transformed themselves into the apostles and ministers of Christ,' even as Satan transformed himself into an angel of light. 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14. Now the true apostles renounced all such vile arts and disguises, and in opposition to them tell us,—

2dly, That they 'walked not in craftiness.' Craft, we know, is a crooked or sinister sort of policy, and differs from wisdom chiefly in point of truth and honesty: for wisdom is attended with integrity and instruction, but craft with falsehood and deceit; the one leads to good, and the other to evil. Hence St. Paul cautions against the 'sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' Eph. iv. 14. By which is meant the subtle arts and methods of false teachers, to beguile and seduce unwary people. Now the apostle here declares, that they 'walked not in this craftiness,' nor used any such indirect arts of policy, but in simplicity and godly sincerity had their conversation among them. So St. Peter affirms, 'We have not followed any cunningly devised fables, when we made known the coming of Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.' 2 Pet. i. 16. We do not seek to impose upon you by any devices or methods of deceit, as the manner of some is; not darkening speech without knowledge, nor misleading you by a cloud or ambiguity of words: but we use all plainness of speech, and deliver nothing but what is confirmed by the clear evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. Moreover,—

3dly, To shew their integrity, he tells us, that 'they handled not the word of God deceitfully.' As they did not the work of the Lord negligently, so neither did they handle his word deceitfully; being 'not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' St. Paul calls the false apostles 'deceitful workers,' 2 Cor. xi. 13; because their study and endeavours tend to the undermining of Christianity, as well as of the hopes of Christians. St. Peter speaks of some false teachers, who 'by feigned words make merchandise of the people,' 2 Pet. ii. 3; turning hucksters of God's word, and selling the truth to get gain: these 'wrest the scriptures to their own and others' destruction,' straining them from their true genuine sense, and putting false interpretations upon them to serve their secular ends. Such as these 'handle the word of God deceitfully,' making it a nose of wax to bend any way, and perverting it to

bad purposes. Of this sort are they (mentioned by St. Paul) who 'creep into houses, and lead captive silly women, laden with sin, and led away with divers lusts.' 2 Tim. iii. 6. By this means they 'come not to endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; turning away their ears from the truth, and turning them to fables.' Chap. iv. 3, 4. But though many such false prophets were gone abroad into the world, yet we are here told that the apostles were none of that number, who adulterate the word of God, and walk in craftiness to deceive the people; but shewed their fidelity,—

Lastly, 'By manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' They dealt simply and plainly with all men, declaring the truth without any disguise, and mixing nothing of sophistry or design; but sincerely and uprightly manifesting unto them the will of God. The false teachers indeed vented lies in hypocrisy, and set off their errors and false doctrines with feigned words and fair pretences. But the apostles of Christ used no such arts, but plainly and purely delivered the word of God, and spake nothing but the truth 'as it is in Jesus.' And for this they appeal not only to the testimony of God, who knew their hearts, but to the consciences of men, who heard and received their doctrine; 'commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.' The false apostles commended themselves only to the fancies and humours of their hearers, and accommodated all their words and gestures more to the gratifying of itching ears, and the increase of parties, than to the glorifying of God, or edifying the Church of Christ. But the true apostles here commend themselves to men's consciences, and appeal to the efficacy and success of their doctrine, and the impression it leaves upon the minds of them that receive it.

Thus we see how St. Paul labours here to clear the integrity of the apostles, the better to preserve the people from the poison of errors and divisions, and to make way for the easier reception of the truths of the gospel.

Now from the plainness of the doctrine, and the simplicity of them that delivered it, the apostle rightly infers, that none now can be ignorant of it, that are but heartily willing and desirous to know it; for 'if our gospel be hid (saith he) it is hid to them that are lost.' If the knowledge of Christ be hid from any, it is from those that neither seek nor desire it, but err and stray from the ways of truth like lost sheep. The light of it shines to all that will open their eyes to behold it; and if it be obscure to any, it is only to such obstinate unbelievers as wilfully shut their eyes against it. It is men's bad lives that blind their minds and harden their hearts against the truths of the gospel: and now that the light of it is come into the world, men's loving darkness rather than light is because their deeds are evil. It is not the lack of sufficient evidence that keeps them from believing the gospel, but

their corrupt hearts make them unwilling to believe it. Its doctrines give a greater check to their lusts than they are willing to receive; and they cannot easily bear those restraints that faith and repentance would put upon them. So that if the gospel be hid, it is to them that are lost to all good manners, as well as to all future hopes of eternal life.

'In whom (as the apostle goes on) the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' Where the blindness of unbelievers' minds is ascribed not to the obscurity of the gospel, which is clearly revealed to them; but to the policy of Satan, who hides from them the knowledge of divine truths, and so darkens their minds, that they may not discern that glorious light which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the 'brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.'

And here we may observe, that Satan or the devil is styled 'the god of this world,' from that usurped power and dominion he long exercised over the Gentile world: and elsewhere he is styled 'the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience.' This evil spirit, to preserve his kingdom of darkness, seeks to keep men in the darkness of error and ignorance, that they may not discern the evil of their ways; and labours to hide the gospel from their eyes, that the light of it may not shine into their hearts. He despairs of one whose eyes begin to open, and therefore uses all means to close them, lest they should behold either the deformity of sin, or the beauty of holiness, and so should eschew the one, and be enamoured on the other; which would be the downfall of his kingdom.

Now as the end of Christ's coming was to destroy this kingdom, by 'turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;' so the design of the gospel preached by the apostles, was to dispel this darkness, and to shed abroad the light and love of divine truths into their hearts: which Satan, to keep his hold, endeavours to frustrate, by blinding their minds, and hardening their hearts in the ways of sin and error. And therefore it concerns us to watch and arm ourselves against his devices, that we be not deluded or destroyed by them.

But lest any should think that the apostles aimed at any secular ends of honour and advantage to themselves in preaching the gospel, and pulling down the strong-holds of Satan; we find them solemnly declaring in the following words, 'We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake:' meaning that they designed not their own honour or preferment in any thing they said or did, nor did they go about to magnify and exalt themselves by setting up the kingdom of Christ; but purely aimed at the glory of God, and the advancing the honour of our Saviour, which ought to be the main end of all our actions. Adding, that as for themselves, they offered men

their service to do them all good offices 'for Jesus' sake;' that is, to gain them unto Christ, to establish his kingdom within them, and to cause him to be served and glorified by them. For this end, and not for any worldly consideration, were our minds enlightened with the knowledge of Christ; and for this purpose were we commissioned to impart this light unto others, in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

So they tell us in the next words: 'For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.' The sense whereof is, that God who illuminated the dark unformed chaos, to give light to the inhabitants of the earth, hath shined into our hearts, to enlighten the benighted world; revealing the mysteries of the gospel to us, that we might reveal them to others; and instructing them in the knowledge of the glory of God, which we can only see in the face of Jesus Christ. For as Moses could not see the glory of God face to face, for the lustre of his countenance, but as it was reflected from an angel in the person of the Son of God; so neither can we behold his glory, but as it is represented to us in the face of Jesus Christ.

Thus we see the sense of the epistle for this day; wherein we are taught,

1. The duty of God's ministers; which is, not to faint in the work whereunto they are called, but to be diligent and faithful in the discharge of their ministry. 'It is required of stewards (saith the apostle) that they be found faithful,' neither doing their master's work negligently nor deceitfully: and this is more especially required of the stewards in God's household, that they rightly dispense the word of God, and give every one their meat in due season; thereby commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: and blessed is he whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

2. We learn here the people's duty; which is to hear and receive the word, not as the word of man, but as indeed it is, the word of God; giving diligent heed lest at any time they let it slip. And that we may all so hear and so do, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXXIX.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. MATTHEW'S DAY.

MATTHEW ix. 9—13.—*And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples,* &c.

THIS gospel for the day gives us an account of Christ's calling St. Matthew to the apostleship; as also of the Pharisees'

objection against his calling and conversing with publicans and sinners: together with our Saviour's reply and removal of that objection. For his calling St. Matthew to the apostleship, we have,

First, The time and place when and where he was called.

Secondly, The trade or course of life he led before his calling.

Thirdly, The manner how he was called. And,

Lastly, His great readiness in obeying the call of our Saviour.

First, For the time and place of this action, we are here told it was 'as Jesus passed forth from thence;' that is, from Capernaum, the place of his usual residence; and went by the side of the sea of Galilee, where 'he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom.' He beheld him busy at his work, and for that reason cast a favourable eye upon him. God Almighty loves diligence in our calling, and is well pleased to see men well employed in the works of their vocation: he passeth by the idle and the slothful, and suffereth them to fall into poverty and contempt; but he blesseth and prospereth such as carefully follow the business of their profession: for 'the diligent hand maketh rich.' It was when St. Matthew was about his business, and employed in the affairs of his calling, that our Saviour took notice of him, and called him to be his disciple. So that by keeping to the duties of our calling, we keep in God's way, and may expect his favour and blessing. And this will lead me to consider,

Secondly, St. Matthew's trade or profession before he was called to be an apostle: and that was the profession of a 'publican' or toll-gatherer, signified here by 'sitting at the receipt of custom.' His business was to gather the tribute and customs due to the Roman emperors; an office some time of great repute and credit, and conferred only on Roman knights or persons of quality; but afterwards, by reason of the great exactions and oppressions used in it, it became vile and infamous: the persons employed in it were odious to the people, ranked with sinners and the worst of men, shunned by all as the pests of a country, and unfit for human society and conversation.

This was St. Matthew's trade and profession, and yet our Saviour made choice of him to be one of his disciples and followers: to shew, that there is no profession or course of life so bad and despicable, as to exclude men from the grace and favour of the gospel. We see St. Matthew here, one of the chief of the 'publicans,' to become one of the principal of the apostles; and he who had drove on a trade of oppression and injustice, is yet made an object of divine goodness and mercy. Zaccheus also, another of the same profession, who had ground down the people by all the arts and methods of extortion, and had a long time traded in the ways and wages of unrighteousness, had the favour of our Saviour's coming to his house, and bringing salvation with him home to his own door. Let none then despair of finding mercy

at God's hands, that find themselves willing to come to him: we see here a door of hope is opened for all that will enter in and receive it, and the arms of mercy are ready to embrace the greatest sinners. From the persons called, I proceed,

Thirdly, To the way and manner of calling them; and that is contained in these words, 'Jesus saith unto them, Follow me.' This was the constant form used by our Saviour in calling his disciples; for when he singled out any to be his servants or scholars, he did it in these words, 'Follow me.' The import of which phrase was, that they should sequester themselves from the incumbrances of the world, to attend his person, to hear his doctrine, and to be eye-witnesses of his miracles; and that because they were not only to learn and believe these things themselves, but to teach and instruct others in them, and to confirm their faith in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. And the better to attend these great things, he wills them to quit all other employments, and to 'follow' him. By this form he likewise called the other disciples; for as Matthew here, so Andrew and Peter, the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, were elsewhere bid to leave all and follow him: and the rest were called by the same form.

But what influence or success had our Saviour's command upon those that were thus called by him? Why, the answer to that will lead us to consider,

Lastly, The readiness of their obedience, in resigning up themselves at his call: for of St. Matthew it is here said, that 'he arose and followed him;' and of the rest St. Luke tells us, that 'they left all and followed him.' They delayed not the time, nor disputed the equity or reasonableness of his command, but presently obeyed and gave themselves up to him. St. Matthew without any ado quitted his publican's stall, and rose from the receipt of custom, where he was sitting: and though he was then engaged in a very rich and gainful employment, the sea of Galilee bringing in the wealth of the world into his lap; yet in the midst of this great affluence and plenty he renounced all, and became a follower of the blessed Jesus. St. Peter, James, and John were mending their nets, and about to cast them into the sea for a draught, when Christ called them; who telling them that he had other work for them, that they should fish for better game, and from henceforth should catch men, they immediately flung up all, and followed him.

I know Porphyry and Julian, two great enemies of Christianity, condemn this as a rash and indiscreet thing in them, so hastily to follow any one that called them: and indeed so it had, if our Saviour had been no more than a common person; but being a teacher come from God, an extraordinary person that brought salvation with him, as by his doctrine and miracles plainly appeared, of which they living in Capernaum were eye and ear-witnesses; it had been folly to delay the time, and wisdom to

make all haste to come to him, being so well prepared to receive the impression of his call.

And this was the more remarkable in St. Matthew, the saint of this day, because he had a very rich and gainful employment, by which wealth flowed into him in a full tide; and yet he exchanged all this for poverty and hardship, quitting his house and all that was dear to him in the world, to attend upon one that had not where to lay his head. And yet he was no loser, but a great gainer by the bargain; for he parted with the perishing things of this life, for a much more enduring substance in heaven, and in effect only exchanged a few specious trifles for a far more precious treasure. For this reason he cheerfully obeyed our Saviour's call, and diligently attended his person, to hear his sermons, and see his works: neither was he discouraged by the mean circumstances of his appearance, for he plainly discerned majesty under the mantle of his meanness, and discovered his divinity through the veil of his humility.

And therefore to his readiness in following of Christ, he added his constancy and perseverance in keeping with him: he never left his Saviour, for whom he had left all things else, but continued with him to the last; he followed him in bonds and imprisonment, and all manner of sufferings, till he arrived at last to the crown of martyrdom.

And as St. Matthew was thus forward and constant in following of Christ, so was he frequent and diligent in bringing more disciples to him. True virtue and goodness is ever more diffusive, and willing to propagate and communicate itself to others: Christ's command to his disciples was, that being 'converted themselves,' they should 'strengthen their brethren;' meaning that they should promote his honour, to whom they had so happily given up themselves. Accordingly we read of St. Andrew, that when he had seen the Messias, he immediately ran and brought Peter to him: and Philip being called, presently goes and finds out Nathaniel, who likewise became one of his disciples. In like manner, St. Matthew, the saint of this day, was not content to be happy alone; but having himself received so great satisfaction in the society and doctrine of our Saviour, was willing that others too should partake of the advantages of both.

To which end, he in honour of his Master made a great feast, at which he desired his presence and company; inviting likewise some of his friends, especially those of his own profession of 'publicans;' hoping by our Saviour's discourse and company to win them over to be his disciples. At this feast, 'Jesus came, and as he sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.' Our Saviour being easy, and freely conversing with them, the Pharisees, whose eyes were evil because another's were good, began to take exception, upbraiding his disciples with this freedom; saying unto them, 'Why eateth your master with publicans

and sinners?' St. Luke adds, that 'the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against him, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.' Luke xv. 2. The 'publicans' (as I before observed) were a sort of persons infamous to a proverb; their great exactions and oppressions made them hated of all men, and being generally heathens, it was forbidden by the Jewish law to eat or converse with them: which made our Saviour describe a despicable forlorn person by the name of 'a heathen man and a publican.' Matt. xviii. 17. The Pharisees therefore would not come near them, and took great offence at our Saviour's sitting at meat with them; suggesting to his disciples, that it was no way becoming so holy a person, as their master pretended to be, to converse thus freely and familiarly with the worst of men: they expected a Messias, that should keep at a greater distance from sinners, and maintain the dignity of his office, by sequestering himself from the bad men of the world; so that when they saw Christ to act otherwise, and make himself so familiar with them, instead of receiving him as a Saviour, they rejected him as an impostor; calling him 'a glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners,' a companion and favourer of loose and vile persons.

Now in answer to this, it follows, 'When Jesus heard that, he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:' meaning that his company was most suitable and necessary, where the wants and maladies of men's souls do mostly call for it: that the 'publicans' and sinners were the sick persons, that stood in need of a physician to heal the maladies of their soul; whereas the more healthy and sound Christians do not so much require it: so that they might as well blame the physician of the body for visiting hospitals and sick patients, where his presence is most wanted, as blame our Saviour, the true physician of the soul, for visiting those that laboured under more spiritual and dangerous distempers, where his spiritual medicines and applications are most required. And this was the sole end and design of Christ's accompanying with these men, viz. to cure the diseases of their souls, and to bring them to repentance and salvation. He did not converse with them to harden them in their sins, but to reclaim them from them, and to let them see the error of their ways: he was so far from approving the exactions of the Pharisees, that he exacted reformation and amendment from them; and instead of encouraging, reprehended and reformed the vices of sinners; as the examples of Matthew, Zaccheus, and others plainly testify. By which it appears, that our Saviour herein acted the part of a friend and a physician for the cure and recovery of sinners, which could not be without conversing with them.

Moreover, in answer to this objection, he bids them 'go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.' The words are quoted out of Hosea vi. 6, where God himself

prefers the acts of mercy and charity, especially in reclaiming sinners, and doing good to men's souls, before all ritual observances, and the nice rules of conversation. The not accompanying with heathens, and eating with sinners, was but a ceremonial precept, to avoid evil manners and contagion from them, which was to give place to justice and mercy, the weightier matters of the law, especially where there was no danger of infection from them, but a prospect of doing much good to their souls: and this was the case of our Saviour's conversing with 'publicans' and sinners; it was not possible for him to receive the least harm from them, being above the power of temptation; but it was probable they might receive much good from him by the assistance of his grace and direction: and therefore he wills them to study this point well, and then they would see little reason of excepting against this freedom of his conversation.

Lastly, he tells them, that 'he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance:' that is, he sought not to make disciples of such as looked upon themselves as saints, and were conceited of their own righteousness, like themselves, for such proud and self-opinionated persons were incapable of learning any good of him; but his business was with those that looked upon themselves as sinners, that is, such humble, modest, and self-condemned offenders, as were sensible of their faults, and willing to amend them. He came to seek and to save them that were lost, that were weary and heavy laden with the burden of their sins, and reckoned themselves lost and undone, without being eased and rid of it. These were the persons he called and conversed with, in order to their repentance and reformation, who would be sooner reclaimed than such as boast of their righteousness, and think themselves good enough already; which sufficiently justifies our Saviour's conversing with 'publicans' and sinners, rather than with the 'Scribes' and 'Pharisees.'

This is briefly the substance of the gospel for this day, which may teach us many good lessons; as,

1. From St. Matthew's leaving his gainful trade to follow our Saviour, we may learn the great duty of self-denial and contempt of this world. This is the first lesson to be learnt in Christ's school, 'If any will be my disciple, let him deny himself (saith our Saviour) and take up his cross, and follow me.' This is the first step to be made in Christianity, and will lead us on to all the rest; but if we boggle at this, we stumble at the threshold, and desert our Saviour at the first setting out: 'He that leaves not father and mother, and all that he hath, for my sake (saith Christ), is not worthy of me;' and if we are not worthy of him, we shall be accounted unworthy to receive any mercy or favour from him: which should wean and unglue our affections more from this world, and fix them chiefly upon the things of a better.

2. Christ's freedom of conversation with 'publicans' and sinners,

teaches us humanity and affability with all men: 'Learn of me (saith he) for I am meek and lowly in heart.' There was nothing crabbed or austere in him, but he shewed himself marvellously free and conversable with all mankind; from whose example we are directed to 'go and do likewise,' to be courteous and obliging to all; and not to decline the civil society of any, especially where there may be any likelihood of doing good. We are indeed to avoid the vices, but not the persons of men; and to shew our hatred to the former, the better to discover our love to the latter.

Lastly, We learn from this discourse, that there is mercy for the greatest sinners, if they turn unto God, and become obedient to the call of our Saviour; which is abundant encouragement to leave all and follow him, who leads his followers to eternal life: to which God of his mercy bring us all. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXXX.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

REV. xii. 7—13.—*There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place any more found in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world*, &c.

THE festival we celebrate this day, is that of St. Michael and all Angels; a festival of great note and antiquity in the christian church.

The collect for the day minds us of God Almighty's 'ordaining and constituting the services of angels and men in a wonderful order;' and from thence teaches us to pray, that 'as the holy angels always do God service in heaven; so by his appointment, they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Where we not only contemplate the order and excellencies of the holy angels, but likewise commemorate the service they do to God in heaven, and the succour they afford to men on earth.

The epistle for the day, of which we are now to treat, tells us of 'a war in heaven,' wherein Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels: where we are to inquire,—

First, Who we are to understand by Michael and his angels.

Secondly, Who by the dragon and his angels: and,—

Thirdly, What was the fight and contest between them, together with the issue and event of the battle. For the

First, Some by Michael understand one of the chief princes that presided over the Jewish nation, mentioned by Daniel, chap. x. 13; where, when the prince of Persia withstood Daniel, for one and twenty days, it is said, that 'Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help him;' and, ver. 21, he is called

a 'prince,' that had the power and command of others; and, chap. xii. 1, he is called 'the great prince that delivers Israel.' Some, with probability enough, think this Michael to be the Son of God, for so the name Michael signifies in Hebrew, one that 'is as God,' or 'like unto God;' which cannot be so properly affirmed of any as of the Son of God. He is sometimes called 'Michael the archangel,' Jude 9, having all created angels under him, who are all commanded to 'worship him.' Heb. i. 6. So that by Michael here is meant Christ, the head of the angels, the governor and defender of his Church, as may be gathered from sundry places of Scripture. By his angels we are to understand the pastors and ministers of his word, who are sent as his messengers and ambassadors, and employed as celestial spirits by and under him.

But who is meant by the dragon and his angels? By the dragon here is meant the devil, who for his fierceness and bloody cruelty against the saints, is styled the great and the red dragon; the following words call him 'the old serpent, the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world,' as he did by beguiling our first parents. St. Peter calls him 'a roaring lion, going to and fro, seeking whom he may devour;' and here he is styled 'the old serpent,' going about seeking whom he may deceive. His angels are the evil instruments and emissaries of Satan, employed by and acting under him for that purpose. Hence we read of the 'place of dragons,' Psalm xliv. 19, which is said to be 'prepared for the devil and his angels.' Matt. xxv. These were the combatants.

But what was the fight or contest between them? Why, that in general was some struggle or conflict between Christ and the devil, about the rule and government of the world, or the sovereignty over men's hearts, which the devil had for some time exercised over the Gentile world. And the issue or event of this contest was, that the dragon and his angels 'prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven; but the great dragon was cast out into the earth,' the place of dragons, 'and his angels were cast out with him;' meaning, that the old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which had a long time deceived the world, was with his whole train of emissaries dethroned, and his usurped power and kingdom utterly destroyed; and that Michael and his angels prevailed, to the erecting and exalting of Christ's kingdom in its stead. And this is that kingdom of heaven so often mentioned in the gospel, which we pray may come and be propagated in the world, consisting of the kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter.

Of this signal victory of the christian Church by the ministry of angels, over the power and malice of the devil, we find frequent mention in holy Scripture. Our Saviour told his disciples, that 'he beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven,' Luke x. 18; meaning, that he saw his power vanish away like a flash of

lightning, which after a short blaze is suddenly out, and comes to nothing. And in John xii. 31, we read, that God by a voice from heaven, which the people took for thunder, or the voice of an angel, declared, that 'then was the judgment of this world, when the prince of this world should be cast out;' meaning, that then was an end put to the devil's usurpation; that his kingdom of darkness was dissolved, and that his power and dominion should be no more.

This was the happy end or issue of this war in heaven, between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his; whereby our blessed Saviour gained such an absolute victory and conquest over sin and Satan, as enabled him and all his followers to 'triumph' over death and hell, 'over principalities and powers, over the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickednesses in high places.' 1 Cor. xv. 55; Col. ii. 15.

But to what particular time or action does this heavenly combat seem most probably to refer? Why, of that there are various conjectures among learned men; as,—

1. Some refer it to the contest that happened at Rome between St. Peter and Simon Magus, wherein St. Peter, as Christ's agent, prevailed against the enchantments of Simon Magus, the instrument of the devil. But how to make this a war in heaven, or a fight between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels, is somewhat hard to conceive. Again,—

2. Some refer this to the opposition made by the heathen emperors, as Satan's emissaries, against the christian church, for the space of three hundred years; which was after defeated and brought to an end by some of the emperors becoming christian. How proper or pertinent this is to the matter in hand, I shall not take upon me to determine.

But there are two more probable eras or actions; the one in the Old Testament, the other in the New, to which this fight between Michael and the dragon may seem more likely to allude. And they are,—

(1.) That of Lucifer's and the apostate angels' expulsion out of heaven, Isa. xiv.; where Lucifer, exalting himself above the Most High, or at least affecting to be like or equal with God, occasioned as it were a war in heaven; and it is very credible that God should make use of some of his heavenly host to drive those from his mansions of glory, whose arrogance had made them the just objects of his wrath. To these St. Jude refers, ver. 6 of his epistle, saying, 'The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, to the judgment of the last day. And St. Peter, to the same purpose, 'God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains and darkness to be reserved unto judgment.' 2 Pet. ii. 4.

(2.) The other place to which this war between Michael and the dragon may seem to allude, is that of Christ's combat with the

devil, mentioned in Matt. iv.; where the devil set upon him in the solitude of a wilderness, with all the fury and subtlety of his temptations; but was manfully repulsed and foiled by him by the 'written word of God, and the sword of the Spirit;' insomuch that the 'devil left him, and the good angel came and ministered unto him.'

But what was that 'contention or dispute that Michael the archangel' was said to have 'with the devil about the body of Moses,' mentioned by St. Jude, ver. 9; wherein 'he brought no railing accusation, but said only, The Lord rebuke thee?' Why, that was, as some think, about preserving the temple and the service of the Jewish church, figuratively styled 'the body of Moses,' as the christian church is 'the body of Christ.' In which dispute he is said to use no opprobrious and reviling language, even to the devil himself, but only 'the Lord rebuke thee;' which may teach us, in all controversies about religion, to avoid all bitter and railing reflections.

Others, again, take the body of Moses literally, and make the dispute between Michael and the devil to be about hiding and interring his body, that the devil might not draw any into idolatry by worshipping his relics. But however that be, most certain it is, that Michael, the angel of light, prevailed over the dragon, and all the powers of darkness; signifying to us, that Christ hath vanquished Satan, and rescued his followers from the power and malice of the devil and his angels; insomuch that though they may tempt, assault, and accuse them, yet they can do them no harm, without their own consent and compliance with them. This is briefly the victory obtained by Christ over Satan and all our ghostly enemies, the first part of the epistle for this day.

The second contains the confirmation of this victory, with the blessed fruits and effects of it; as also the comfort it affords to the godly, and the terror to the wicked: of which briefly. And,—

1. This victory is confirmed by a voice in or from heaven; so the next words tell us, 'I heard a loud voice, saying in heaven,' &c. signifying the great joy that was among the saints and angels in heaven upon this great victory: and being heard by St. John, it must likewise sound from heaven, and both yield abundant confirmation of the truth of it. A voice in or from heaven, proceeding from the mouth of God, or his messengers the holy angels, must carry with it the most certain and infallible evidence; and there can be no doubt of a truth thus delivered and confirmed.

But what did this voice deliver? Why, the joyful words that follow; 'Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God day and night:' that is, upon Christ's conquest and triumph over Satan and his evil spirits, salvation and strength is come to his church and people. Now they are out of the reach of his power, above

the danger of his assaults, and freed from the sting and venom of his temptations: he who was once the 'god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruled in the children of disobedience,' is now disarmed and dethroned, and can no more harm us than a dead lion or a painted serpent.

And as this voice in heaven pulished 'salvation and strength' to mankind, so did it declare the kingdom of God, and the power of Christ; saying, 'Now is come the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:' not that God had not a kingdom before, for that was from everlasting; but it then became more visible, and Christ's power, which was infinite and before all time, was then made more manifest and apparent to the world, according to that of the Psalmist, 'Thou hast prepared thy throne in the heavens, and thy kingdom ruleth over all.' All which is now evident, because 'the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.' The devil hath his name from a calumniator, and Satan is here styled 'the accuser of the brethren,' because he trades in lies and false accusations, and is ever ready maliciously to charge and slander the servants of God: he was a liar and slanderer from the beginning, and the father of them: he deceived our first parents by his lies, and robbed them of their innocence by his false suggestions. Gen. iii. 5, 10. He falsely accused Job before God, as if all the service he paid him was merely mercenary, and proceeded only from interest and by-ends: 'Does Job (saith he) serve God for nought? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and all that he hath, blessing the works of his hand, and increasing his substance in the land? But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.' To prove him a liar, God Almighty permitted him to try the experiment, by touching all that he had, and letting loose the Chaldeans and Sabeans upon him to spoil all his substance. In all which he preserved his integrity, never murmuring or charging God foolishly, but patient and thankful under all; and instead of cursing, blessed God in his afflictions as well as prosperity. In like manner, when 'Joshua the high-priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan was found standing at his right hand to resist him.' Zech. iii. 1. Our Saviour told St. Peter, that 'Satan desired to sift him as wheat.' Luke xxii. 31. And though Michael, in disputing with him, brought no railing accusation, yet he is ever bringing all the railing accusations he can against the people of God; which may acquaint us with the forwardness as well as falseness of his accusations. But thanks be to God, 'this accuser of the brethren is now cast down,' nor can his accusations come up against us to do us any harm; his mouth is stopped, and we may insult over him in the words of the apostle, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?' Rom. viii. 33, 34.

He who ceased not to accuse day and night, is now put to eternal silence, and the sound of his accusations drowned by the louder and sweeter voice of Christ's blood; for so the next words tell us, 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.' This victory over the devil and his angels was obtained for us by the death of the Son of God, who being 'the Lamb slain,' in God's decree, 'before the foundation of the world,' and in time offered up as a ransom for mankind, hath thereby 'taken away the sins of the world;' and having by that means satisfied all the demands of Divine justice against us, none can lay any thing to our charge, that is not fully satisfied by that all-sufficient sacrifice.

And this is confirmed to us by 'the word of God, and the testimony of those, who loved not their lives unto the death.' Christ and his apostles, who revealed these things to us, have sealed the truth of them with their blood, and laid down their lives, to give us the full assurance of them. So St. Paul tells us, that 'they counted not their lives dear to them, but delivered themselves up unto death for Jesus' sake, to testify the truth of the gospel,' Acts xx. 24, and 2 Cor. iv. 11; which should teach us to persevere in the belief and confession of it to our lives' end.

This, in the close of the epistle, is made matter of joy to the inhabitants of heaven, and to all good men that remain upon earth, who are called upon to rejoice in it; saying, 'Rejoice therefore, rejoice, ye heavens, and all that dwell in them;' for the devil, with all the apostate crew of evil spirits, are cast out of heaven, and shall not hurt you upon earth, if you consent not, nor comply with them: 'Resist the devil, (saith the apostle,) and he will flee from you.' Withstand his temptations, and he shall not prevail against you; do but keep your ground, and you may be sure to win the field: for 'neither angels nor men, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus.' Rom. viii. 38, 39.

But 'woe to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea,' who yield up themselves to his power, and are overcome by his temptations; 'for the devil is come down unto them,' to keep them his vassals as long as he can, 'having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.' Sentence being passed upon him, he seeks to draw others into the same condemnation, and to secure those whom he hath gotten into his snare; and his rage is the greater, because his reign is the shorter. His time is limited, beyond which he cannot pass; he is held as it were in chains, and bound over to the judgment of the last day: in the mean time his malice is great against the Church, and he seeks to execute his rage to the utmost against Christ's kingdom, because the time is hastening, when he is to be for ever shut up in hell.

Thus we see the end and issue of this combat between Michael and the dragon, or between Christ and Satan, with the agents and instruments of each; in which we are to bless God for the victory he hath given us over the devil, and beating down Satan under our feet; so that we are rescued from his power, and armed against his wiles and temptations. Satan's kingdom is broken, and the kingdom of Christ is come upon us: to which therefore let us yield up ourselves willing and faithful subjects, by a cheerful and constant obedience to his laws; so shall we ere long be translated from his kingdom of grace here, to his kingdom of glory hereafter.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXI.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

MATT. xviii. 1—10.—*At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,* &c. *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*

THIS gospel for the day contains chiefly these three things:—

First, Our Saviour's advising his disciples to humility, and not to affect any worldly greatness; from the 1st to the 6th verse.

Secondly, His cautioning them not to offend any of his little ones that believe in him; from the 6th to the 9th verse.

Thirdly, A reason given against offending or despising of them, from the care that is taken of them by the holy angels; ver. 10. For the

First, The disciples, upon Christ's mentioning his resurrection, began to think of worldly honours and preferments to be had in his kingdom, and so 'came to him at that time' with this question, 'saying, Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' Our Saviour perceiving what their minds chiefly ran upon, and the vain expectations they had from him, 'called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Where he in effect bids them to behold the innocence and simplicity of the little child set before them, and by that emblem learn to have no more thoughts or desires of any earthly greatness, than that harmless babe, who had no notion of, or regard to such matters; and unless they changed their minds and inclinations, and became as unconcerned in these things as little children are wont to be,

they could never be his disciples, nor receive any benefit by him; for he came not to promote them to any dignities or pre-eminences here in this world, but to prepare them for the glories and happiness of the world to come; 'Whosoever therefore (saith he) shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and whoso shall receive one such little child in my namé, receiveth me.' Where our Saviour measures all true greatness, not by the outward height of any worldly pomp or preferment, but by the inward lowliness and humility of the mind; and this he did to wean his followers from this world, to keep them from 'minding too much earthly things,' and to raise 'their affections to the things above;' knowing, that how little or low soever they may be in their substance and condition here, they shall be reckoned the greatest hereafter in the kingdom of heaven.

And because such humble, meek, and self-denying persons are apt to be despised and looked upon as mean abject persons in the eyes of the world, our Saviour adds, 'that whosoever shall receive such little ones in my name, receiveth me;' meaning, that all the honour or favour shewed to them for his sake, will be accounted as done to himself; and all the contempt offered to them, will be reckoned as done to his own person. And this will lead,—

Secondly, To the caution here given against the offending one of these little ones; 'Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, (saith our Saviour,) it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.' Where we may observe both the sin and the punishment.

The sin is the offending one of the little ones that believe in Christ; by whom we are to understand those young tender converts that had newly embraced the christian faith; or those humble, meek, and lowly disciples of Christ before mentioned, who imitate the modesty, simplicity, and docility of little children, having no ambitious aims after earthly greatness, but 'laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisy, and envy, and evil-speaking, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby.' These are the little ones that we are to be very tender of offending. By which we are to understand,—

1. All grieving, troubling, or disquieting of them, which is a great offence or unkindness done to any; for 'by sorrow of heart (saith Solomon) the spirits are broken;' and therefore good men seek to prevent trouble, and promote the ease, joy, and comfort of one another: it is the evil and wicked spirits only that disturb the rest and peace of mankind, and delight in troubling of any; which we are carefully to avoid to Christ's little ones.

2. By offending of them, is sometimes meant the despising or contemning of them; so it is understood in this chapter, 'Take

heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,' ver. 10; that is, let not the modesty and humility of Christ's disciples sink your esteem of them, or make you set them at nought, as vile and abject persons; but rather set the greater price and value upon them, and let them rise the higher in your opinion, by how much the lower they are in their own; for so God Almighty rates and values persons, not by the height, but by the lowliness of their mind; he hath respect to the humble and meek, but beholdeth the proud afar off.

3. Offending is mostly taken in Scripture for laying a stumbling-block in the way of another, at which he may stumble and fall, and so signifies the ministering or giving occasion of sinning to others by word or deed. In this sense the apostle speaks of some men's 'eating with offence,' by occasioning their falling into sin, and wills men 'not to eat flesh, or any thing whereby their brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.' Rom. xiv. 20, 21. And in the Epistle to the Corinthians, he advises them 'to give no offence to the Church of God,' but to abstain from every thing 'that may make their brother to offend.' 1 Cor. viii. 13. So that to offend one of these little ones, is to say or do any thing, which may, as a stone in the way, trip up their heels, or make them fall, by casting in some let or hinderance to discourage them from their duty, or throwing in some bait or allurement to draw them into sin. To give an occasion of falling into either of these things, by any advice, encouragement, or example, is to offend Christ's little ones, the thing here cautioned against, and that with a severe threatening and penalty; for whoso thus offends one of Christ's little ones, 'it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea;' which expression is not to be taken literally, it being impossible that a millstone should be hanged about any man's neck; but in a comparative and hyperbolical sense, to signify the heavy and intolerable load of God's displeasure against such offenders, which will as certainly and inevitably sink them into the gulf of perdition, as if they were pressed down to the bottom of the sea by the ponderous weight of a millstone; and that they might easier bear up under the burden of this, than under the weight of the other.

From whence our Saviour takes occasion, in the next words, to denounce 'a woe unto the world because of offences;' that is, for the great encouragements they give unto the wicked, and the many stumbling-blocks they lay in the way of the righteous, whereby they draw men into sin 'as with a cart-rope,' and 'lead them into iniquity by the cords of vanity,' as the prophet expresses it, Isa. v. 18; for by this means 'it must be that offences come;' which necessity proceeds not from the nature of the things, as if they could not be avoided, but from the corruption of men's natures, that unhappily tends and leads to them. The malice, pride, inconstancy, and corrupt designs of too many, will neces-

sarily occasion such offences; and the providence of God permits them for the trial of good, and the punishment of bad men: but yet 'woe be to them by whom the offence cometh;' for this will not excuse, but aggravate the crime and condemnation of those, who shall be found the instruments and authors of such offences.

'Wherefore (saith our Saviour) if thy hand offend thee,' by touching any unclean thing, or fingering any unjust gain; 'or if thy foot offend thee,' by walking in any forbidden ways, or treading unlawful paths; 'cut them off, and cast them from thee: or if thine eye offend thee,' by wanton looks or lascivious glances, becoming thereby the windows of lust, or the inlets of uncleanness, Πόρνας ἐν ὄμμασιν ἔχων, 'having eyes full of adultery; pluck them out, and cast them from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into life halt and maimed, and with one eye, than having two hands, or two feet, or two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire.' If any member of thy body, instead of being an instrument of righteousness unto holiness, become an instrument of sin, or an occasion of falling; or if (as the words figuratively import) any darling or beloved vice hath gotten the mastery of thee, and so 'easily beset thee,' as to become 'thine own iniquity,' though it may be as dear to thee as a right hand or a right eye, yet rid thyself of it by excision or repentance; it being far more desirable to enter the regions of purity and perfection with maimed and mortified members, where all defects will be supplied, and all the parts advanced to endless and complete happiness, than to be cast whole and entire into everlasting fire, there to be tormented for ever with the devil and his angels.

After this, our Saviour renews again his former caution, saying, 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.' Think not meanly of them as abject persons, nor look down with scorn and contempt upon them, as unworthy of your care or consideration; but rather set a high value and esteem upon them, doing them all the good, and keeping off all the evil ye can from them.

And that for a good reason added in the close; 'For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven;' that is, how little or low soever these young believers may be in their own, or the world's account, yet are they honoured by God with the ministry and guardianship of his holy angels, who wait in his presence, and continually attend his throne.

Now because it was for these words that this portion of Scripture was selected for the gospel of this day, it will be requisite to speak a little the more to them. To which end, I shall inquire,—

1st, Into the nature of angels.

2dly, Into their office, in attending upon, and ministering to God's people. And,—

3dly, Wherein this their office and ministry doth consist. For the

1st, An angel in general imports no more than a messenger sent or employed about another's business; but more especially and eminently an angel signifies a heavenly messenger, or ambassador sent by God for the good of mankind. For their nature, they are said to be pure spirits, void of all corporiety or matter; but yet so as to be able upon occasion to assume some thin and airy bodies, and to appear in human shape; though some of the ancient fathers and philosophers have affirmed them to be made, and consist of some of the purest and finest matter, thinking none but God himself to be a pure and simple spirit.

That there are such high and noble creatures of a middle nature and intercourse between God and man, is evident not only from the general consent and tradition of the world about it; but from the clear and express testimony of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament: in both which, we read of their frequent appearances, to deliver some great and important messages. And this will lead,—

2dly, To the office and business of the angels: and that is,—

(1.) To give their immediate attendance upon the throne of God, and to be always in his presence; signified here by the 'continual beholding the face of our heavenly Father,' which is implied in their 'being continually before him.' 1 Kings x. 8. And next to that they are,—

(2.) To minister to the occasions and necessities of his people, and to be the guardians of his children. Hence they are styled 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.' Heb. i. 14. Holy David tells us, that 'the angel of the Lord tarrieth about them that fear him, and delivereth them.' Psal. xxxiv. 7. And to animate his people in all their distresses and difficult undertakings, he adds, 'He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.' Psal. xci. 11, 12. From these and many other places of holy Scripture, it hath been the received opinion both of Jews and Christians, that every man, or at least every good man, had a guardian angel appointed him by God, to take especial care of him and his concerns, both in temporal and spiritual matters. Hence Abraham told his servant concerning his son Isaac, that 'God would send his angel before him, and prosper him in all his ways.' Gen. xxiv. 7, 40.

In the New Testament we read of St. Peter, that when a maid told the disciples, that Peter 'was at the door,' they thinking him to be fast in prison, said, 'It was not him but his angel;' Acts xii. 15; which words proceeded from a current opinion among them of guardian angels. And here in the text our Saviour, speaking of these little ones, saith, 'Their angels,' that had the particular care of them, 'still beheld the face of God:'

that is, as a learned paraphrast tells us, their guardian angels here on earth have a continual recourse to the glorious presence of God in heaven, and being high in his favour, have always access to his throne, to make requests or complaints in their behalf, and to receive his commands concerning them; which they are ever ready to execute, and therefore are painted with wings, to represent the swiftness and activity of their motion. Isa. vi. 2.

But, 3dly, wherein doth the ministry of angels consist? Why,

(1.) In delivering messages from God, and thereby declaring his mind and will to his Church: this they did by the prophets in the Old Testament, and by the apostles in the New. Thus an angel appeared to Abraham and Lot, to Moses, and the other prophets, to let them know upon occasion what they should say or do. In the gospel we find the birth of John the Baptist declared by an angel. Luke i. 13. So was the conception, birth, and resurrection of our blessed Saviour; ver. 30, 31, and chap. ii. 10. Hence the angels are styled 'God's messengers,' to receive his errands, and to execute his will; which they do with great diligence and fidelity. To which end they are said to be endowed with knowledge and true holiness, called therefore the 'holy angels.'

(2.) Their ministry consists in guarding and defending God's church and people from all dangers, spiritual and temporal. Hence the angels are said to 'excel in strength, to do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.' Psal. ciii. 20. They defend both the bodies and souls of the saints, the one from the malice of their enemies, the other from the fury of evil spirits. We read that God, willing to 'defend Jesusalem' against the great army of the Assyrians that came against it, sent his 'angel that smote in one night 185,000 of them in their camp, who all became dead corpses.' 2 Kings xix. 35. Sometimes the angels divert the evil intention of enemies, sometimes they forewarn us of the danger, and remove evil accidents from us. They are present with us and preside over us in the public assemblies, where the apostle advises to reverence and a comely behaviour, 'because of the angels.' 1 Cor. xi. 10. They assist us in the hour of death, and convey the souls of the saints, as they did Lazarus's, 'into Abraham's bosom.' Luke xvi. 22. Finally, they assist at the resurrection, by re-uniting our souls and bodies; and at the day of judgment, by instating both into the regions of bliss and immortality.

From all which, we may learn to magnify the wisdom and goodness of God, in appointing such excellent and glorious beings to minister to our salvation; and to be ever blessing and praising of him for the invisible aid and protection we daily receive from them.

Next, We may comfort ourselves against all the power and malice of the devil and his evil instruments, by the continual assistance we are assured of from these good angels.

Moreover, Let us imitate their example in serving God with the same readiness and zeal here upon earth, that they do in heaven, and in condescending to any service for the salvation of men's souls; not despising any, for whom God takes such care by his holy angels.

Lastly, Let us secure to us their ministry now, that we may for ever enjoy their society hereafter.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXII.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. LUKE'S DAY.

2 TIM. iv. 5—15.—*Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry: for I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*, &c. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed to Thessalonica, Crescens to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia: only Luke is with me*, &c.

THE saint whose memory we celebrate this day, is St. Luke, one of the sacred penmen of the holy gospel; who for his fidelity in writing the life of our blessed Saviour, and the acts of his holy apostles, justly deserves to be remembered in the annals of the Church; and for the constancy of his faith and friendship to be recommended to all posterity.

He was born at Antioch, a city famous among other things for that honourable style and character that was there given to the disciples; 'who were called Christians first at Antioch.'

In the collect for the day he is styled 'Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the gospel;' from which profession he was 'called to be an evangelist,' which at first signified in general a preacher of the gospel, but was after restrained to those four, who wrote the history of the life and doctrine of our Saviour. He was likewise called from a physician of the body to be a 'physician of the soul.' And from thence our Church teaches us to pray, 'that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed.'

Beside his skill in physic, he is said to be famous for painting; and there are some pieces said to be drawn by his hand still extant in the world.

For his religion, he was brought up in that of the Jews, and converted from it, not by the immediate call of Christ himself, as many of the other apostles and evangelists were; but, as he himself tells us, by some 'who were from the beginning eye-witnesses and ministers of his word.' Luke i. 2.

It is generally supposed that he was converted by St. Paul during his stay at Antioch: after which, he became an inseparable companion and fellow-labourer with him in the work of the

ministry: especially after the vision that called him into Macedonia, where St. Luke attended him, and ever after continued with him, as we read, Acts xvi. 10.

The epistle for this day contains St. Paul's directions to Timothy for the faithful discharge of his office to which he was called: where he wills him,—

1st, To be vigilant and watchful over the flock committed to his charge: 'Watch thou in all things.' He had before strictly charged him, to 'preach the word in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.' And that because the time was coming, when many would not 'endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears:' the issue whereof would be the 'turning away their ears from the truth, and turning them unto fables.' To prevent which he advises him to 'watch' against such false teachers 'in all things;' to watch against their doctrine, and against their designs, against their errors and corruptions, and all their devices.

As a shepherd seeks to keep off the wolf, and to secure the sheep from him; so a faithful pastor will look warily to his flock, to defend them from wolves in sheep's clothing, that come only to deceive and devour them: which made him exhort Timothy to keep a strict guard against them. And lest he should be discouraged by any dangers or difficulties he might meet with, he directs him,—

2dly, To patience and magnanimity in sufferings, saying, 'Endure afflictions.' These are apt to dishearten and divert men from the prosecution of their designs, and to cool their zeal even in the best undertakings: and therefore St. Paul here and elsewhere exhorts his disciples, to 'be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,' to arm himself against all trials, and not to faint under any tribulations.

3dly, The apostle exhorts him to 'do the work of an evangelist.' Now the work of an evangelist was to be both a writer and a preacher of the gospel: of the first sort were the four evangelists, whereof two were apostles, to wit, St. Matthew and St. John; the other two, St. Mark and St. Luke, were properly evangelists. The apostles were chiefly employed in ruling and governing the Church, 'ordaining elders in it, and setting in order the things that were wanting.' Tit. i. 5. The evangelists were persons sent by them to evangelize or preach the gospel, to baptize and teach the people to observe all that Christ had commanded. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Of this sort was St. Luke, the saint of this day, whom St. Paul sent to preach the gospel in Dalmatia and Galatia; and after that in Italy and Macedonia, where he spared no pains, nor declined any dangers in the work whereunto he was sent. And this is to do the work of an evangelist, namely, to discharge the duty of a true and

faithful minister of Christ. To which end he farther exhorts Timothy,—

4thly, To 'make full proof of his ministry;' that is, as he elsewhere explains it, by 'shewing himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' 2 Tim. ii. 15. Where he would have him first approve himself unto God, by the sincerity of his aims and intentions; and next unto men, by the soundness of his doctrine and the integrity of his life: by both which he would shew himself an able and expert workman, that could fall under no blame or reproof, but rather deserve praise and commendation, by rightly dividing the word of truth; not handling the word of God deceitfully, but telling all men their duty, and giving to every one their meat in due season.

And this the apostle would have him the rather do, because his time here was but short: 'For I am now ready to be offered (saith he), and the time of my departure is at hand:' meaning, that he was shortly to be tried for his life, and in great danger to fall a sacrifice to the rage and fury of his persecutors.

However, this (saith he) doth not much dismay me, having the testimony of a good conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity I have had my conversation here in this world; which gives me full assurance of future joys and happiness in another. So he declares in the next words, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.' The words are agonistical, and allude to the prizes fought for and obtained in the olympic games. The expression, 'I have fought a good fight,' relates to the valour and victories of those combatants, and signifies the conflict he had with, and the conquest he had over his ghostly enemies. His saying, 'I have finished my course,' refers to their running of races, and denotes his perseverance in the christian course, and holding out to the end; whereby he had 'run with patience the race that was set before him.' His 'keeping the faith,' alludes to the observing the laws of warfare, and keeping to the bounds and limits of the race; and signifies to us his keeping to the rules of the gospel, and continuing firm and unmovable in the Christian faith. This the apostle calls the striving lawfully, saying, 'No man striving for mastery is crowned, except he strive lawfully:' and wills us all 'so to run that we may obtain.' 1 Cor. ix. 24, 25. Now he having acquitted himself in all things as a soldier of Jesus Christ, and finished his course with joy, 'Henceforth (saith he) there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness:' where is a manifest allusion to the crown or prize that was wont to be set up at the end of a race; which in those games was only 'a corruptible crown,' a garland of flowers or chaplet of roses, or other such fading things: but we in our

christian course seek 'an incorruptible crown, a crown of glory that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us;' styled here 'a crown of righteousness,' which the apostle tells us 'was laid up for him,' and that 'God the righteous Judge would give him at that day.' Where is a farther reference to the manner of receiving the reward or prize in those races, in which there was a judge appointed at the end of the race, to observe who came first to the goal, and to adjudge the prize to him, to whom of right it belonged.

Accordingly the apostle declares here with great assurance, that 'the Lord, the righteous judge,' would award and 'give him a crown of righteousness at the last day; and not to me only (saith he), but to all them that love his appearing.' Where he shews a difference between the Christian and other races; for in the Grecian races, though all run, yet but one receives the prize; but in this Christian race the prize will be adjudged to all that hold out faithful to the end, and all will be crowned that look and long for his appearance.

These things St. Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, where being a prisoner, he desired Timothy with all speed to come to him; 'Do thy diligence (saith he) to come shortly unto me;' being willing either to impart something more of his mind to him, or to receive some advice and consolation from him, before he came to his trial. And this he would have him do because many of his friends had left him in his troubles; 'for Demas hath forsaken me (saith he), having loved this present world.' Demas had before accompanied and assisted him in preaching the gospel, as appears in Col. iv. 14, and Philem. ver. 24, but now he was gone from him, either for fear of danger in continuing with him, or from hopes of gain in leaving of him; or else 'he is departed to Thessalonica,' to mind some worldly affairs. 'Crescens is gone to Galatia,' and 'Titus to Dalmatia;' so that I am now almost left alone, for 'only Luke is with me;' which words relating to the saint of this day, and shewing the constancy of St. Luke's faith and friendship, together with his diligence and perseverance in the work of the ministry, will deserve to be a little more considered. And,

First, We may observe here the constancy of St. Luke's faith; for when Demas forsook Christ and St. Paul, from an inordinate love of this present world, St. Luke kept firm and steadfast to both: 'Only Luke is with me.' Our Saviour had some mercenary disciples, that followed him only for the loaves: they kept with him while any thing could be gotten by him, but when that failed, 'they went back and walked no more with him.' John vi. 66. We read of others that for awhile received his word with joy, but when any tribulation or persecution arose because of the word, 'by and by they were offended.' Matt. xiii. 41. These were a sort of nice and delicate Christians, who would follow their Saviour in ways that appeared easy and pleasant to them; but

when once they came to any rugged or miry path, they left him, and would go no farther with him. The apostle speaks of some among the Galatians, that they began well, and set out right at their entrance upon the Christian course, with some fair and promising hopes of their continuance: 'Ye did run well (saith he), who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?' They started fair, and ran well for awhile, but they soon grew out of breath, and lost the prize for not holding out to the end of the race. And we have still too many of such short-breathed Christians, who seem very zealous by fits and starts, but quickly flag and tire, and in a manner give up all. They can stick to their religion while the sun shines, and the world smiles upon it; but when a storm arises, and their interest or safety seem to lie another way, they then wheel about, and care no longer to maintain that which they think unable to maintain them. This is the guise and practice of too many hollow and hypocritical pretenders to Christianity.

But we are taught other and better things from St. Luke, the saint of this day, who not only began well, but held out to the last; being neither diverted by the love, nor discouraged by the hatred or terrors of the world. He never left St. Paul, because he saw him resolved not to leave our Saviour, and so was a constant follower of him, as he was of Christ. He was not, with Demas, bewitched by the sorceries of the world, nor enchanted by the charms of earthly profits or pleasures; but kept on his christian course, as well when beset with thorns, as when strewed with palms and roses. In a word, he never shrunk or started aside from the truth, but continued with St. Paul in the defence of Christianity, when others left it: and, to crown all, he cheerfully laid down his life for the testimony of the gospel which he had written.

Secondly, We may observe here not only the constancy of his faith, but the sincerity of his friendship; for when others forsook St. Paul in the troubles and calamities that befell him, the saint of this day faithfully stuck to him: 'Only Luke is with me.' The chief mark and property of a true friend, is not to leave any in the time of adversity; and affliction is the best touchstone to try the truth and reality of friendship: 'A true friend (saith Solomon) will love at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.' Prov. xvii. 17. Where we have the constancy of his affection, he will love at all times; and his fidelity in time of need, he is born for adversity. There be many that will follow and stick to us in times of prosperity, when they can partake of our joys, and share the benefit of our good fortune; who yet in times of adversity, when the tide turns, and our fortune runs low, will soon leave and forsake us: and such are frequently the friendships of the world, mutable, mercenary, and uncertain.

Whereas there are but few such faithful friends, that will stand by or keep with us, when the world frowns upon us, and

run the hazards and difficulties of our misfortunes; yet such a one was St. Luke. He continued with the apostle in all his troubles and afflictions, in his trials at Rome, and arraignments at Jerusalem, and never deserted him in all his perils and persecutions, but constantly attended him, till he had finished his course and received the crown of martyrdom.

Thirdly, Here is observable not only the constancy of his faith and friendship, but his diligence in the work of the ministry. He continued a fellow-labourer, as well as a companion with St. Paul, and spared no pains in publishing and propagating the gospel; in which respect likewise he used these words, 'Only Luke is with me.' When others grew cold and remiss in this work, as Demas did, who left it to follow the world, St. Luke stuck to his calling, and abated nothing of his zeal and diligence for all the dangers and discouragements he met with in it. Having put his hand to the plough, he would not look back, but continued faithful unto death, and hath, no doubt, received a crown of life.

But to go on with the epistle: St. Paul being thus almost left alone, having only Luke with him to assist in the work of the ministry, sent to Timothy with all possible speed 'to come to him;' and to 'take Mark,' kinsman to Barnabas, 'and bring him with him, for he was profitable to him for the ministry:' having some particular work for him in preaching the gospel, as he had for 'Tychicus, whom he had already sent to Ephesus' for that purpose. And in his way to him he would have him call at Troas, where he had left some books and garments with one Carpus, and to 'bring them with him, but especially the parchments,' which were of some great use and service to him. While the apostle was at Troas, he speaks of one 'Alexander a coppersmith, who did him much evil,' referring him to the just judgment of God to 'reward him according to his works.' What this Alexander was, and what evil he did the apostle, we may learn from Acts xix. 33, where we read, that this Alexander, who was a Jew by birth, but a Christian by profession, was seized in a tumult about St. Paul, and brought into the assembly by the Jews, who were malicious against Paul, thinking he had something to allege against him, and that to excuse himself he would lay all the blame upon St. Paul. Accordingly, 'he beckoned with his hand, and would have made his defence unto the people;' but was hindered from it by the cry and uproar of the people; he designing to clear himself, and lay the whole fault upon the apostle; for which St. Paul tells us he did him great harm, and therefore excommunicated and 'delivered him up to Satan, that he might learn not to blaspheme,' 1 Tim. i. 20, 'of whom,' he wills Timothy, to 'be aware also, for he hath greatly withstood our words;' that is, to look upon him as a person excommunicate, and avoid him for his contumacious opposing and resisting our doctrine.

Thus we see the sense and substance of the epistle for this day, wherein St. Luke is represented as a pattern of constancy and perseverance in the faith, which we ought all to follow; and likewise as an instance of a true and faithful friend, in sticking to the apostle in the times of his greatest trouble and trials, which is a virtue fit for all men to learn and imitate. And lastly, as an example of unwearied diligence and fidelity in the business of his calling; from which nothing could draw or discourage him: a lesson worthy of imitation, and may teach us to go and learn to do likewise.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXIII.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. LUKE'S DAY.

LUKE x. 1—7. — *The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. Go your ways, behold I send you forth,* &c.

THE gospel for this day gives us some short account of Christ's sending forth his disciples into the world, together with the commission given and granted to them. In which we may observe,—

First, The person sending.

Secondly, The persons sent.

Thirdly, The manner of sending them. And,—

Fourthly, The errand upon which they are sent.

First, For the person sending, that, as the first words of the gospel tell us, is 'the Lord;' that is, the Lord Christ, who is made Lord of all, to whom 'God hath given to be head over all things to his church.' Eph. i. 22. This church is sometimes styled a kingdom, in which Christ is the King to rule and govern it; sometimes a house or family, wherein Christ is the Master, to order and dispose all things in it; sometimes a school, wherein he is the Teacher, to direct and instruct it. Again, sometimes he is called the Captain of our salvation, to lead and conduct us in the paths of life; sometimes the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, to feed them with knowledge, and guide them to eternal life. And lastly, he is styled 'the High-priest of our profession,' in all things having the pre-eminence. So that in all the instances of power and authority, Christ is truly and properly 'the Lord,' said here to be the person sending.

Secondly, For the persons sent, they are here said to be the 'seventy,' or, as other copies have it, the seventy-two disciples. 'The Lord appointed other seventy also;' which words imply his

sending some before and beside these. And so indeed he did; for when he first entered upon his prophetic office, of revealing to mankind the will of his Father, and instructing them in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, he made choice of twelve apostles, to serve him in that office, suitable to the number of the twelve patriarchs, who were the appointed preachers of righteousness to the old world.

After that, he appointed other seventy also, agreeable to the like number of elders, chosen by Moses out of the several tribes to govern the congregation of Israel; of which we read, Numb. xi. 16. Now these seventy were to be to Christ, as disciples were wont to be to the prophets; that is, to go on his errands as he should appoint them: which they did by turns, going two at once as harbingers to proclaim his approach to every city where he designed to come; for so 'he sent them two and two before his face into every city or place, whither he himself would come.'

But because the province they were to undertake was large, and the number of those that were to be employed in it was but small, 'therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.' Where, by 'the harvest,' we are to understand the whole world, which then lay in wickedness, overrun with weeds, and overspread with the black and thick darkness of error and ignorance; a great part whereof still sit in the regions of the shadow of death; all which are to be brought into the barn, that is, to be gathered into Christ's Church, and enlightened with the knowledge of God.

This harvest is here said to be 'truly great,' extending itself to the compass of the whole earth, which is to be 'filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.' By the 'labourers' in this harvest, we are to understand the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, who are sent to plant the gospel in all parts of the barren world, to sow the seed of God's word in all places, to scatter the light of it into all the dark corners of the earth, and by all good means to cultivate and bring in the harvest; that 'all nations may see and partake of the salvation of God.'

Now 'these labourers are' here said 'to be few;' there being then no more than the twelve apostles, and the seventy disciples, for the accomplishing of this great work, which requires more heads and hands to effect it. 'Pray ye therefore (say the next words) the Lord of the harvest,' that is, Christ the head and governor of the Church, 'that he would send more labourers into his harvest;' that he would increase the number of his ministers according to the extent and exigencies of all mankind, who being all to be gathered into one flock, and brought into one fold, there may be no want of shepherds to call and guide them to it: that as there be many that are ready to receive the gospel when

revealed to them, so God would be pleased to direct and incline the hearts of many to undertake this office, and to preach it to them. And because this may not be done without a commission, for 'how shall they preach, (saith the apostle,) except they be sent?' Rom. x. 14; therefore we are here bid to pray the Lord of the harvest to send and commission them for this work. This is a matter of the highest concern and greatest importance to the whole world, and so justly deserves and calls for our most hearty prayers; for which, as we have abundant reason, so have we sufficient encouragement from God's promise of 'making his way known upon earth, and his saving health unto all nations.' God the Father promised to 'give his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession;' to 'bring his sons from far, and his daughters from the ends of the world;' that is, to bring them all within the pales of his Church, and to enlighten them with the knowledge of divine truths; of which we have many promises extant in sacred writ.

Now, this is to be done by ministers or messengers duly qualified and authorized for this purpose, with whom Christ hath promised to be present with his Holy Spirit always to the end of the world, and to prosper the work in their hands. And because the harvest is great and of large extent, we are directed to pray for labourers to be sent forth in it; which is a matter well worthy of our prayers and best endeavours, without which it cannot be brought to pass. And therefore we are bid to pray for 'labourers,' not loiterers, in the harvest; that is, for such as are willing to 'labour in the word and doctrine, studying to approve themselves unto God, as workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth:' who are therefore to be 'accounted worthy of double honour, and to be highly esteemed in love for their works' sake.' These are the persons sent, from whence I proceed, as the epistle leads me, to consider,

Thirdly, The manner of Christ's sending them, together with the usage or entertainment they were like to meet with, in the following words: 'Go your ways; behold, (saith he,) I send you forth as sheep among wolves.' Where, after his declaring his mission of them, 'Behold, I send you forth,' he lets them know what they were to expect from the world, viz. to be used 'as lambs among wolves.' He did not flatter them with any hopes of preferment or worldly greatness, but rather the quite contrary; telling them what dangers they were to undergo, and what hazards and difficulties they were to be exposed to, even as the innocent sheep among ravening wolves. The sheep, we know, is a creature remarked for its meekness and innocence, for it often receives, but never does any harm; and likewise for its usefulness, for it furnishes us with all the necessaries of life, food and raiment, feeding us with its flesh, and clothing us with its fleece; and thereby supplies the wants both of the belly and the back. Such meek and useful creatures would Christ have all his

disciples and followers to be, viz. averse from the doing of any evil, and prone to all manner of good. Whereas the rest of mankind, who are their enemies, are compared here to 'wolves,' whose property it is to bite and devour: and, indeed, the world is too apt to worry the flock of Christ, to 'revile and persecute' his followers, and to 'say all manner of evil of them for Christ's sake.'

However, Christ hath willed them not to be dismayed, but rather to 'rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is their reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets,' and all holy men that went before them, who now reign with him, and are abundantly recompensed with a crown of glory.

Having thus informed and armed them against the worst that can happen, by an assurance of an ample reward for all that they shall do or suffer for him, he bids them go on with courage and cheerfulness in the way and work about which he had set them; adding withal some directions for their better assistance and encouragement in so great a work. As,—

1. He wills them, in going upon his errands, 'to carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes,' as men are wont to do in other journeys; for he that calls them to more than ordinary work, will take more than ordinary care, and make a suitable provision for them. St. Matthew hath it, 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses;' that is, carry no provision of money; 'nor scrip for your journey,' in which travellers used to carry their victuals; 'nor two coats,' taking no care for clothes, 'or shoes, nor yet for staves,' to support or defend you in the way; meaning, that they should not trouble themselves with things that may be a clog or hindrance to them in the way and work of their calling; for God would provide for all their wants, and furnish them with all necessaries in his service, which we find he accordingly did.

2. He bids them to 'salute no man by the way;' that is, spend no time in vain and empty compliments and salutations, that are usual among men, nor be delayed by any offices of friendship, acquaintance, or other common civilities to any; but wholly mind and intend the business you are sent about, and let nothing hinder or divert you from it: not that all kind of salutations or common civilities were absolutely forbidden to the apostles and disciples of Christ; for he himself commanded them, 'into whatsoever house they came, to salute it.' Matt. x. 12. But the salutations here forbidden, were those false and deceitful compliments, that take up too much of the time and thoughts of vain persons. There was a pious salutation among the Jews, of wishing peace to one another; which was a wish of health and happiness: and this they used to those they met morning and evening, and especially at the entrance into each other's houses; nor did the Gentiles omit this religious civility, but the heathens did the same.

This custom our Saviour observed himself, and enjoined it on his disciples: for though he would not have them stay and neglect their business, by frequent, formal, and ceremonious complimenting those they met with by the way; yet, to shew he disliked not any due, seasonable, and common civilities, he ordered them, at their entering into any house, to 'salute it,' saying, 'Peace be to this house.' He himself, in the evening of his resurrection, going into the house where his disciples were assembled, saluted them twice, with 'Peace be unto you,' John xx.; which was a prayer for all sorts of blessings to be heaped upon them, being all included in the word 'peace:' and the same charge he here gives to his disciples, saying, 'Into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' And, indeed, considering the comprehensiveness of the wish, no better prayer can be made for them: for this apostolical salutation was not intended as a mere compliment, but a real benediction, as appears by the next words: 'And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it;' that is, if there be any pious person there, to whom this blessing belongs, or is capable of receiving it, called here 'the son of peace,' as the apostate traitor is called 'the son of perdition,' John xvii. 12; if, I say, there be any such worthy person in it, qualified and prepared to receive the blessing, your prayer shall prevail for it, and your peace shall come and rest upon that house: 'if not,' if there be no such pious or worthy person dwelling there, that is, fit to receive such a blessing, 'it shall turn to you again;' your prayers and good wishes will not be lost, but the blessing shall return into your own bosom: for though it is unprofitable to that house for which you ask it, yet your zeal and good wishes for them shall be as well accepted and rewarded, as if they were actually accomplished in them.

Again, another piece of advice that our Saviour gave his disciples, was, 'When they came into any town or city, to inquire who was worthy, (that is, fit and able to receive them,) and there to fix their station, without removing to any other house, during their stay in that place; but to 'remain in it, eating and drinking such things as they give,' receiving without any scruple the entertainment that should be there offered to them; neither should the giver or receiver look upon it as any burden, 'for the labourer is worthy of hire;' meaning, that the provisions they receive from others for preaching the gospel to them, are not to be reckoned as a gift, but a debt due from them, and as duly to be paid as wages are for work; for 'God hath ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.' 1 Cor. ix. 14. He who gave and hath the free disposal of all men's estates, hath reserved and assigned a certain portion of their substance for the maintenance of his ministers. This the apostle in that chapter sets forth and proves at large, both under the law and under the gospel: 'It is written in the law of Moses,

(saith he, ver. 9,) Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.' In ancient times the corn, that is now thrashed out by the flail, was trodden out by the feet of oxen and other beasts, to whom it was permitted to eat of the corn and the straw, as the reward of their labour; and God commanded that 'they should not muzzle the mouth of the oxen,' to hinder them from eating, 'when they were treading out the corn.' Deut. xxv. 4. 'Doth God (saith he) take care for oxen,' and order, that while he is treading the corn, he should have the liberty to eat of it? And hath he made no provision, think you, for his own ministers? Does not the ploughman plough in hope of a reward, and the husbandman sow in hope of reaping the fruit of his labour? 'And if we have sown unto you spiritual things, (saith the apostle, ver. 11,) is it a great thing if we reap your carnal things?' Is it not barbarous injustice to withdraw earthly food from that mouth from which ye receive heavenly nourishment? or will any bring penury into the family of that man, by whom he is received into the family of Christ? Shall the spiritual husbandman in Christ's vineyard fare worse than our ordinary ploughmen? And when 'every workman is counted worthy of his meat,' Matt. ix. 10, shall the fellow-workers with Christ be left destitute of all provision? No, God hath taken better care of them, and hath assigned the tenth of every man's substance to be their portion; the withholding whereof, in whole or in part, is not ordinary theft, but sacrilege, and the worst of robberies, even the robbing of God, who hath reserved that part for the maintenance of his service, and given it to them that wait at his altar. 'Know ye not (saith the apostle) that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple?' that is, of the tithes that were set apart and dedicated to the use and service of the temple. 'And they which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar;' that is, of the offerings and sacrifices brought and offered upon the altar: 'Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel.' Where the apostle sets down not only the matter or provision made for Christ's ministers, but likewise the manner of it, that it be in the same manner as it was under the law: 'Even so;' that is, by tithes and offerings, for so was the ministry of the altar maintained. And, in Gal. vi. 6, it is said, 'Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things.' Where, though the proportion be not mentioned, yet is it to be interpreted by other scriptures, where the tenth part is assigned by God himself for that purpose.

And our Saviour's approving the punctual paying of tithes in the Pharisees, saying, 'These things ought ye to have done,' is an abundant confirmation of that proportion; and his adding, 'Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the

kingdom of heaven;' shews, that Christians should rather exceed than come short of them in that particular.

Finally, St. Paul, in the epistle to Timothy, wills, that 'the elders that rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' Where by honour is, by all interpreters, understood a maintenance; and by double honour, an honourable maintenance, for the same reason here given, 'For the labourer is worthy of his reward.' 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. Thus we see our Saviour's sending forth his apostles and disciples, with the care and provision he hath made for them.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXIV.

THE EPISTLE FOR ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE'S DAY.

JUDE, ver. 1—9.—*Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called; Mercy, and peace, and love be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,* &c.

THE subject of this day's festival, is the remembrance of a pair of saints, St. Simon and St. Jude; who being brothers, and both apostles, the Church hath coupled them together, and celebrated their memory in one solemnity.

For St. Simon, little more is mentioned of him in Scripture besides his name, who is sometimes styled 'Simon the Canaanite,' and sometimes 'Simon the Zealot;' both which, in different languages, signify the same thing, viz. one of a hot and vigorous temper, reckoned therefore of the sect of the Zealots. Ecclesiastical history tells us, that in executing his apostolical office, he went into divers and sundry countries; and among the rest, that he came to these 'western' islands, and planted the gospel here in Britain, where after many troubles and difficulties undergone by him, he suffered martyrdom for the faith of Christ.

For St. Jude, he likewise, in the gospel, is called sometimes Thaddeus, and sometimes Lebbeus; it being usual in those times to have two or three different names.

But the most memorable thing of this apostle, is the general epistle left behind him; wherein he exhorts to constancy and perseverance in the faith, to prevent the danger of apostasy, and escape the sore evils that befall revolters.

The collect for this day prays God, who hath built his Church upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; to grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit, that we may be made a holy temple acceptable unto him.

To which end, the epistle directs us to stick close to the Christian faith, as we shall see after. And in it I shall observe,—

1st, The inscription, in the first words, 'Jude, the servant of Christ;' where his styling himself 'Jude, the servant of Christ,' hath made some question, whether it was Jude the apostle, or another Jude, that was after bishop of Jerusalem. But this doubt hath but a weak foundation, against the current testimony and tradition of the Church; especially considering, that an apostle of Christ signifies one sent upon his service by a commission from him, and so in effect it is all one with a 'servant of Christ,' and may be expressed by the one as well as by the other. But to put this matter out of doubt, he styles himself, in the next words, 'the brother of James;' for so we read he was, Matt. xiii. 55; and that can agree to no other Jude but this apostle, who gives himself these titles, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, who had made that name infamous and detestable by betraying his Saviour.

For the persons to whom this epistle is directed, it is 'to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called:' that is, to all good Christians in general, and more especially to the Jewish converts, who had received the Christian faith, described here by their 'sanctification by God the Father, their preservation by God the Son, and their vocation, or being called by God the Holy Ghost.' These he salutes in the following words, with wishes of all spiritual blessings, saying, 'Mercy unto you, and peace and love be multiplied:' which is the common salutation of the apostles in all their epistles, and includes in it all manner of happiness. From the inscription I proceed,

2dly, To the subject-matter of this epistle; and that begins in the next verse: 'Beloved (saith he), when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation:' that is, of the great deliverance and preservation of the Christians, from the fatal and general destruction that was coming on the unbelieving Jews; 'it was needful to write unto you' upon that subject, and from thence to 'exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.' Where, by 'the faith delivered unto the saints,' we are to understand the doctrine of Christ revealed to us in his holy gospel, which contains the way and means contrived by the wisdom, and effected by the power of God for man's salvation. This faith is said to be 'once' delivered, that is, once for all, *simul et semel*, there being no new discovery or revelation of the will and mind of God to be made, beside that which is made already, and all additions and contradictions to it are to be rejected with an anathema.

But how would the apostle have us to 'contend' for this faith? Why, earnestly; that is, not feignedly or in pretence only, but sincerely, and in good earnest; nor yet faintly, with coldness and

indifference, but zealously, with warm and vigorous affections; and likewise constantly, without weariness and defection.

1. I say we are to contend earnestly or sincerely for the faith, in opposition to all false or feigned pretences to it. There are some who make use of religion only for a cloak to cover their ambition, avarice, and other enormities; and others that plead for and pretend to the faith, merely to promote a faction and serve a party, which is not so much to contend for, as against it.

2. We are to contend earnestly; that is, zealously and warmly for the faith, in opposition to all coldness and indifference about it: 'It is good (saith the apostle) to be zealously affected always in a good thing;' and we cannot be zealous in a better thing, than in the faith of Christ. To be cool and indifferent here, is to be lukewarm and hypocritical: which instead of pleasing Christ, will provoke him to spew us out of his mouth.

3. We are to contend earnestly; that is, constantly and perseveringly for the faith unto the end, in opposition to all weariness and apostasy: 'We shall reap (saith the apostle) if we faint not;' but if we flag and grow weary of our work, we shall reap nothing but the barren fruits of our own folly. We must 'fight the good fight of faith,' and persist in it, before we can receive the crown; but if we let fall the combat, we may expect nothing but shame and disappointment. He that runs a race, must hold out to the end, if he mean to win the prize; and we must 'keep the faith,' and continue so doing to the last, if we expect to 'receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.'

But to shew farther the manner of contending for the faith, we must know, that this is not to be done by arms; for faith being an imminent and internal act of the soul, is not to be forced by any external acts of violence; it is the Mahometan, not the Christian way, to preserve or propagate religion by the sword. It hath been well observed by a wise man, that religion is often lost, but never gained by rebellion, and that none fight for religion that have any: they are only the double-minded and designing men that have recourse to arms for that purpose; and our Saviour hath told us, that 'they who thus use the sword, shall perish by the sword:' whereas the contending for the faith here exhorted to, is,—

1. The contending for it by arguments, and the wise arts of persuasion: for the mind is wrought upon by instruction, not by compulsion; and truth enters into the soul, not by dint of arms, but by dint of argument: 'Be ready (saith St. Peter) to give a reason of the faith and hope that is in you;' 1 Pet. iii. 15; and we should be always ready, by Scripture and reason, to convince and convert gainsayers.

2. We are to contend for the faith by earnest and fervent prayer. We cannot propagate or defend the faith by our own strength, and therefore must call in the aid of divine grace to

our succour. Peter's faith had failed, if Christ had not prayed for him; and ours will fail much more without the like assistance: but though we can do nothing without him, 'yet we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us; his grace will be sufficient for us,' and if he be for us, it matters not who is against us. Prayer then, which engages God of our side, is the best weapon to defend the faith; and if we rightly wield it in our contending for it, we shall not fail of success: for 'the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.' James v. 16.

Lastly, We are to contend for the faith by magnanimity and patience in sufferings; so did the apostles and primitive Christians, who overcame all their enemies, not by fighting, but by suffering, and vanquished the greatest opposition by bearing, not by shrinking from the cross. They planted the faith by their doctrine, and watered it with their blood, and that made it to spring up into a plentiful harvest, insomuch that it now spreads over the face of the whole earth: and nothing so checks its growth or hinders its progress, as wars and commotions; for by that means what was gained by patience, will be lost by resistance, which is best prevented by a quiet and peaceable living by the rules of it. In short, 'the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual, and are mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan, and the building us up in our most holy faith.' Christ the captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings, and his followers the apostles attained to perfection the same way; and if we suffer with or for him, we shall also be glorified together.

But why are we thus 'earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints?' Why, for that the apostle here subjoins two weighty reasons; the one is taken from the number and subtlety of those adversaries, that seek to subvert or to corrupt the faith; the other from the great danger of falling from it into unbelief.

For the 1st, The apostle in the next words tells us, that 'there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.' Where the certain men crept in are, in the parallel place of St. Peter, said to be 'false prophets and false teachers,' 2 Pet. ii. 12, who drew the people from sound doctrine, and led them into many dangerous errors: their 'creeping in unawares,' is there expressed by their 'privily bringing in damnable heresies;' and by St. Paul, by their 'creeping into houses,' and deceiving or 'leading captive the weaker sex,' 2 Tim. iii. 6; both which set forth the slyness and subtlety of their false arts to seduce the people, and to compass their evil designs. And these are here said to be 'of old ordained to this condemnation;' where the word in the original is, προγεγραμμένοι εἰς τοῦτο τὸ κρῖμα, which is badly rendered, 'ordained to this condemnation;' as if

they were by a fatal decree determined to it: but the true signification is, that it was of old forewritten or prophesied of them, that they would bring this judgment upon them; and is therefore expressed by St. Peter, by their 'bringing upon themselves swift destruction.' And these are described by the wickedness of their lives, and corruption of their manners; 'ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness,' whose ways are contrary to the will of God, by making his goodness an encouragement to vice, and abusing his blessings by luxury and wantonness: which things they do, and allow themselves in so long, till they come to that height of wickedness, as to 'deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ;' that is, till they arrive at Atheism, by denying the being and providence of God; or fall into Deism, by 'denying our Lord Jesus Christ,' which St. Peter expresses, by 'denying the Lord that bought them:' which made the apostle caution the Hebrews against it, saying, 'Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' And this will lead me to the

2d reason for contending earnestly for the faith, taken from the extreme danger of infidelity, or falling from the faith of Christ. To convince us whereof, the apostle here 'puts us upon remembrance of what we before knew and heard of, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, and afterward destroyed them that believed not,' we might the better see the great evil and mischief of infidelity. This instance of unbelief is set forth in the third chapter to the Hebrews, together with the sore punishment that attended it; where the apostle, asking the question, 'To whom God sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest?' answers, 'To them that believed not.' Infidelity shut the gates of heaven against them, 'so that they could not enter in because of unbelief,' vers. 18, 19.

This is farther confirmed by two or three doleful examples, mentioned in the following verses of the epistle for this day: the first whereof is that of the fallen angels, in those words, 'The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day;' meaning, those of them that apostatized from God, and fell from the faith and love of their Maker, were cast out of heaven, and are bound over to the eternal torments and miseries of hell: which shews the danger of revolting from the faith, and the safety of contending for and adhering to it. The next example is that of 'Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities round about,' who falling from the faith, 'gave themselves over to fornication; and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.' A sad instance of the fatal end of all sensualities, how the flames of lust kindle the flames of God's wrath, and lead to fire everlasting, of which that material fire that consumed them was a token or sign.

Lastly, Here is farther mention made of another sort of heretics who had left the faith, styled 'filthy dreamers, that defile the flesh.' These are supposed to be the heretics that lived in the apostle's time, known by the name of Gnostics, who were led about by vain dreams, to the abusing of themselves, and corrupting of others. They are described here by two vile and wicked practices; their 'despising dominions, and their speaking evil of dignities:' the one relates to temporal, the other to spiritual governors.

For the first, they taught the doctrine of christian liberty, so as to free Christians from the yoke of government; and stretched it so far, as to exempt subjects from obedience to magistrates, and servants from subjection to their masters: so that inferiors, instead of serving and honouring, were taught to turn upon and rise up against their superiors, which is what is here meant by 'despising dominion.'

For the second, 'their speaking evil of dignities,' signifies their contumelious behaviour, or setting at nought church rulers or governors: when they who are to be highly esteemed, and counted worthy of double honour for God's and Christ's sake, are vilified, ill-spoken of, and evil-entreated by a profane and wicked world. These were the corrupt doctrines and practices of these heretics, and there are but too many in our days who embrace their pernicious errors, and tread in the steps of their evil examples, against whom the saint of this day would have us to 'contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;' which is the principal lesson taught in this General Epistle, inscribed to all Christians, who are all concerned to learn and practise it.

To draw, then, to a conclusion; let us all engage in this happy contention, to preserve the unity and purity of the christian faith, against all sin and error. There are some that would undermine the faith by schisms and divisions, and others that would corrupt it by errors and heresies; both which are great opposers of Christ's doctrine, and great obstructers of our salvation: and therefore let us contend,—

1. For the unity of the faith against all sectaries and dividers: 'There is but one faith,' (saith St. Paul,) and this one faith was but 'once delivered to the saints.' Let us not, then, divide it by sects, nor multiply it by new pretences to revelation; but 'stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;' as we are exhorted, Phil. i. 27.

2. Let us contend earnestly for the purity of the faith, against all that would blend or corrupt it. Of this kind are heretics of all sorts, who seek to deprave or deny many of the articles of the christian faith; as the doctrine of the Trinity, the satisfaction of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the like; staggering and perverting the faith of many in these things.

3. Let us contend earnestly for the continuance and propagation

of the faith, against those that would subvert and undermine it. Of this sort are the atheists, anti-scripturists, libertines, and free-thinkers, who would lay aside all religion, or only make it a tool to serve their other secular ends and designs.

Lastly, Let us contend earnestly for the faith, by living answerable to it, against all loose and profane professors of it, who are its greatest enemies, and do it the most mischief. In a word, let us contend for it against all opposers open and secret; and then, by fighting the good fight of faith, and keeping to it, we shall ere long receive a crown of glory: which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXV.

THE GOSPEL FOR ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE'S DAY.

JOHN xv. 17, to the end.—*These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you: if ye were of the world, the world would love his own; because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*, &c.

IN the collect for this day, we pray for grace to be joined together in unity of spirit by the apostle's doctrine, that we may be a holy temple acceptable unto God. To which end,—

In the gospel for the day, we are exhorted to brotherly love, as the best cement of that union, and the firmest bond to hold us together. It begins with our Saviour's command to that purpose: 'These things I command you, (saith he,) that ye love one another.' He had, in the foregoing part of the chapter, shewed, in many instances, the great love he bore to them: 'As my Father loved me, so have I loved you,' ver. 9; which, we may be sure, was with an entire and ardent affection. He treated them not as servants, who are kept at a distance from the master's presence and counsels: 'I call you not servants, (saith he,) for the servant knoweth not what his master doeth;' but I have called and treated you as 'friends,' by imparting to you the secrets of my Father's mind and will, and that so faithfully, as to hide nothing from you: 'For all things that I heard of my Father, I have made known unto you,' ver. 15. Again, I prevented you with my free and undeserved favours, having 'chosen you' to be my disciples, when you had no thoughts of 'choosing me,' that I might obtain for you an answer to your prayers; and 'whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, he may give it you,' ver. 16. These are all tokens of the most dear and unfeigned love; and yet he gave a higher instance of it than all this, in vouchsafing to die for them: 'And greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friends,' ver. 13.

And now, having mentioned these things, he lets them know what return he would have them make for them; and that was no difficult service, but the soft and easy return of loving one another: which he might very well command and expect from them, from the obligations he had laid upon them; and therefore urges it in a commanding style upon them, saying, 'These things I command you, that ye love one another.' Now, this love here inculcated upon them, consists chiefly in inward hearty wishes and desires of each other's happiness and welfare, and likewise in outward expressions and endeavours to promote it; avoiding all things that may offend, injure, or disquiet our neighbour, and doing and delighting in all good offices that may be pleasing or profitable to him: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour,' (saith the apostle, Rom. xiii. 10;) it will hurt none in body, goods, or name; but, on the contrary, will do the best service it can to each; and therefore love is said by the apostle to be 'the fulfilling of the law,' and elsewhere it is made the sum and quintessence of the gospel: which should teach us to pray and labour for this excellent grace, and 'above all things to have fervent love and charity among ourselves.'

But lest any should be discouraged from this duty by the hatred and contrary practices of the world, our Saviour seeks here, by sundry arguments, to arm his followers against all such discouragements. And,—

1st, To fortify them against the hatred of the world, he minds them of the base and unworthy carriage of the world towards him, to prevent surprise, if they met with something like it: 'If the world hate you, (saith he,) ye know that it hated me before it hated you.' It began with me, and you may not think it strange if they pursue you, as my followers, with the same. Though I came into the world merely to rescue it from misery and ruin, and to purchase redemption and salvation for it; yea, though I loved the world so well, as to lay down my life for it, and shed my blood, to procure for it eternal life; yet hath it returned me hatred for my good-will, and, instead of requiting my love, hath repaid it with affronts and indignities.

But how came the world thus to hate Christ, who came into it merely for the happiness and salvation of it? Why, the reason of that is plain. He came first to save men from their sins, in order to the salvation of their souls, which could not be accomplished without it; and therefore the chief reason of the angel's assigning to him the name 'Jesus,' or 'Saviour,' was from 'his saving the people from their sins.' Matt. i. 21. Now because the world, by reason of the corruption of men's nature, and the strong bias of custom and bad examples, were so much in love with their darling and beloved vices, they could not but hate him, who would take them off from what they were so long accustomed and addicted to, though it were for their greater good. And this is,—

2dly, A reason given by our Saviour for the world's hatred of his followers: 'If ye were of the world, (saith he,) the world would love his own.' If you would shew yourselves the friends and followers of the world, by conforming to the vicious courses, evil customs, and bad examples of it, the world would then take you for its own, and love and caress you for its friends and admirers; 'but because ye are not of the world,' but have renounced the pomps and vanities of it, professing yourselves to be but pilgrims and strangers here, and to belong to another and more heavenly country, 'therefore the world hateth you.' And 'because I have chosen you out of the world,' to be the members of my church, and to be a peculiar people zealous of good works, dignified above, and separated from, the common herd of other men, therefore do they make you the object of their hatred and contempt. Your deeds being directly contrary to theirs, there can be no concord or agreement between you, no more than there is between light and darkness, or between God and Belial. Your piety upbraids their profaneness, and your holy lives are a censure and check to their ungodly conversations; and this raises their spleen, and sharpens their tongues against you, 'thinking it strange,' (as St. Peter expresses it,) or taking it amiss, 'that you run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,' 1 Pet. iv. 4; reproaching and railing at you for refusing to run headlong with them into the commission of their abominable impieties.

But to comfort the disciples under this hard usage, our Saviour bids them, in the next words, to 'remember the word that he said unto them, The servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, (saith he,) they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.' Where he minds them of what he had often told them, that 'the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.' Matt. x. 24. In the verses immediately going before, he gave them to understand, that they should 'be hated of all men for his sake, and should be persecuted from city to city;' withal bidding them 'not to marvel if the world hated them, for it hated him before it hated them.' And the disciple cannot in reason expect to be better used than his master, or the servant than his lord; it is enough for them to be as their lords and masters, and they may not hope to be better treated or dealt with than they. If their masters meet with persecution, and are made to drink of the bitter cup, it is unreasonable for the servants to expect wholly to escape it, or that the cup of affliction should altogether pass from them. 'If they have kept my saying, (saith Christ,) they will keep yours also;' that is, your doctrine as well as persons are like to meet with the same entertainment with mine: if they have received my doctrine, or kept my saying, they may receive yours also; but if they have not obeyed or observed, but rejected mine, you may easily

think what will become of yours; for being the same doctrine, it will find the same usage.

'But all these things will they do unto you (saith he) for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.' All this ill treatment, both of your persons and doctrine, will be shewed you upon my account, and for the hatred they bear to me, because you are my disciples, and preach in my name, as also because they know not the Father that sent me. They will not believe that I come from God, though I bring the broad seal of heaven to confirm my commission, even a power of working miracles, so many and so great, that none but one that comes from God, or is assisted by a divine power, is able to perform. Though they daily see these things done by me, yet they will not believe in me, nor know him that sent me: which ignorance is not invincible for want of the means of knowing better, which are daily afforded them; but wilful and affected, by their obstinate refusal of the means vouchsafed to them, and wilfully withstanding the evidence of truth conveyed by them: so that their pretended ignorance is utterly inexcusable, and is so far from lessening, that it highly aggravates both their sin and their condemnation: and therefore we find our Saviour, in the following words, arguing both from his doctrine and miracles, to enhance their guilt, and increase their punishment.

1. As for his doctrine, he tells them, ver. 22, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin.' If I had not come in the flesh as the Messias, to reveal unto them the Father's will, and to instruct them in the true way and method of salvation, speaking to them as never man spake before or since; they might have seemed in a manner innocent, and their sin, if any, would have been nothing in comparison of what it is now. But now, after so clear a discovery and proof of my mission from the Father, and my commission to teach and direct them; and after having faithfully discharged this office, by unfolding to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and given them the words of eternal life: they are now utterly void of all excuse, they can make no apology nor shew any colour or pretence for their sin; they cannot plead ignorance of their duty, when the light of divine truth brake forth and shined round about them: nor can they pretend weakness or inability to do as they were directed, since all due encouragement and assistance was tendered to them, and his grace was ever ready and sufficient for them; so that all pleas and pretences are wholly cut off from them, and they have no cloak to cover their infidelity. And having given them such plain evidence of his being sent from God for their salvation, all opposing of him must be a wilful resisting of God himself, in whose name and by whose authority he had spoken unto them: for which reason he adds these words, 'He that hateth me, hateth my Father also;' both which are done by rejecting his words, and

both will be followed with the utter rejection of their persons for ever. Moreover,—

2. Our Saviour farther argues with them from his works, and aggravates their infidelity from the many miracles they saw done before them; ver. 24; 'If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.' This was spoken immediately to and of the Jews, who obstinately withstood all the means and methods of conviction. They had been ear-witnesses of his doctrine, who spake as never man spake; and they were eye-witnesses of his miracles, who did those works that never man did: and yet neither could what they had heard or seen overcome their prejudices, or work any faith or belief in him. 'If I do not the works of my Father (saith he in another place), believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.' John x. 37, 38. Where Christ appeals to his works for the truth of his Messiahship; 'The works that I do (saith he) in my Father's name, they bear witness of me,' ver. 25, being a clear demonstration of a divine power: which works if you had not seen done by me before your eyes, something might be said to extenuate and excuse your unbelief; 'If ye were blind (as he told the Pharisees), and could not see, you should have no sin:' no great guilt would lie upon you, but such as might be easily answered and done away. 'But now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth:' since you own your eyes are open, that you sin not through ignorance or inability to know better, but that what you do is done knowingly and deliberately; therefore your sin remaineth, and the guilt of it will lie heavy upon you. John ix. 41. Now you have seen my works, and have thereby sufficient evidence of my being sent by the Father, your sin is inexcusable, and your infidelity unpardonable; for it proceeds from a certain malignity of mind whereby 'you hate both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass (saith he), that the word might be fulfilled that is spoken in their law, They hated me without a cause.' The words are extant in Psal. xxxv. 19, where David speaks of some that hated and opposed him, who ought in reason and gratitude to have loved and obeyed him: which was spoken literally of David and his enemies, who pursued and persecuted him without a cause; and prophetically of Christ, whose adversaries most unjustly, and against many obligations to the contrary, harboured a deadly hatred, and carried on malicious designs against him.

However, though the world may thus despitefully use and entreat him, returning him hatred for his good-will; though they may treat him as an enemy, and reject him as an impostor; yet there is one coming, that will give them a better light into these matters, and cause them to see and believe those truths, which at present they cannot or will not perceive. 'When the Comforter

is come (saith he), whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.' He who is here styled a Comforter, is in the original an advocate, or one that pleads or defends a cause. So the same word is rendered, 1 John ii. 1, 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, (to wit, one to plead our cause before him,) even Jesus Christ the righteous.' And this advocate hath here another advocate to plead his cause, and that is the Holy Ghost, called here 'the Spirit of Truth,' whom he will send from the Father; for he is said to proceed both from the Father and the Son: and he at his coming shall give men a clearer insight into divine truths, he shall maintain my cause against all opposers, and plainly demonstrate the truth of my mission. 'He shall testify of me,' partly by the inward motions and excitations of your minds, and partly by the outward ministry and operation of his miracles; and by both shall certify you of the truth of what I have declared to you, and convince you of the divinity of my doctrine.

'And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning:' that is, when the Holy Ghost cometh, he shall endow you with power from on high, and furnish you with abilities to bear your testimony of me in all parts of the world. To which end he shall pour upon you the gifts of wisdom and knowledge, to enable you to discern the truth aright; and likewise the gift of tongues, to enable you to discover and propagate it in the languages of all countries: for which you are already in some measure qualified, having been with me from my first entrance on the ministry, and continued with me ever since.

This is the sum of this day's gospel; from which we may learn,—

1. The great lesson of brotherly love and kindness, which our Saviour here commands, and gives in charge to all his followers, and elsewhere makes it the distinguishing mark and badge of his disciples; willing them to love their neighbour as themselves, and to do to all men as they would be done unto, by avoiding all things that may be any way hurtful to them, and following all things that may be profitable to their salvation.

2. We learn from hence, that the hatred of the world is no discharge from this duty of loving them, nor should it be any discouragement from it: for our Saviour teaches us to 'love them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us;' and here tells us, that 'if the world hate us,' we need not wonder, for 'it hated him before it hated us:' and the disciple cannot expect better usage than his Master. It is honour enough for us to be made conformable to his sufferings, that we may be partakers of his glory; and we may be well enough content to bear the cross, that will surely bring us to a never-fading crown.

3. We learn hence the heinousness of the sin of unbelief,

which the clear discoveries and revelations of the gospel have rendered altogether inexcusable. For after all that Christ had said and done for man's salvation, it must be mere obstinacy and perverseness of will to refuse or neglect it: and that will shew us,—

Lastly, The great danger of infidelity, or sinning against light and knowledge, which our Saviour makes the reason and aggravation of their condemnation; that 'Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.'

Upon the whole, then, let us take heed that there be not found in any of us an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God: which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXVI.

THE EPISTLE FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY.

REV. vii. 2—13.—*And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in the foreheads*, &c.

HAVING celebrated the particular saints recorded in the annals of the Church, there remains one festival more for All Saints; especially those that are departed this life in the faith, fear, and favour of God, and advanced to the regions of bliss and glory in the highest heavens. All which are yearly remembered by us on this day, according to that saying of the Psalmist, 'The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.'

Not that we are to pray unto them or for them, for both those are bootless and uncommanded services; but to preserve the honour and memory of their virtues, to praise God for the benefit of their good examples, and to pray unto him for grace so to tread in their steps, that with them we may be partakers of his everlasting kingdom.

To this purpose, the collect for the day teaches us to pray to 'Almighty God, who hath knit together his elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of his Son Christ our Lord, to grant us grace so to follow his blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which he hath prepared for them that unfeignedly love him.' Where we are minded of that one fellowship and communion of saints, into which God hath knit together his chosen people in the mystical body of Christ; to the intent that we may keep steadfast in the communion of the Church militant here upon earth, that we may be fitted to join for ever with the Church triumphant hereafter in heaven. To which end, we pray this

day for grace to imitate their holy lives in this world, that we may be qualified to partake with them in the happiness of the next: being encouraged by their example to run with patience the race that is set before us, in hopes of attaining to that prize of bliss and glory, which our forerunners in the faith have already received.

The epistle for the day contains a vision of St. John's, in which was represented to him some of the evil angels that have power to hurt the earth; and likewise some of the good angels that have power to save and deliver it.

Of the first sort, are those spoken of in the first verse of this chapter, wherein St. John mentions his 'seeing four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.' Where by the four angels some understand the emissaries or instruments of Satan, who have power from God to punish the earth with famine, pestilence, and the sword, and to execute his vengeance upon the wicked, when he thinks fit to permit or commission them thereunto; as also to afflict and trouble his own church and people, for the trial of their faith and constancy, when he sees cause to suffer it. These angels or messengers are said to stand on the four corners or quarters of the earth, ready to execute God's judgments upon the world, whenever he is pleased to permit or command them. Moreover they are described 'holding the four winds of the earth;' that is, having the command of the winds, to raise or restrain them as occasion shall require, either by making them high and boisterous, to scatter and infest the earth, or by causing them to cease, 'not to blow on the earth,' to refresh it, 'nor on the sea,' to move it, 'nor on any tree,' to nourish and fructify it; all which are supposed to relate to the punishments foretold and threatened to the land of Judea, putting a stop to them for awhile, and for some particular reasons not suffering them to break out presently.

After which, the epistle for the day tells us, 'He saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God;' where, by another angel, is meant one of the good angels, styled 'another,' in opposition to the former destroying angels. He is said to 'ascend from the east,' that is, as some expound it, to come from Christ, who is sometimes called Ἀνατολή, 'the east, or the rising sun, the sun of righteousness, or the day-spring from on high,' which riseth in the east. Mal. iv. 2; Luke i. 78. This good angel is said to 'have the seal of the living God;' the holy Scriptures make frequent mention of 'the seal of the Spirit, the seal of the living God,' and the like; whereby he distinguishes his own flock, and marks them up for eternal life. 'The foundation of the Lord standeth sure, (saith the apostle,) having this seal, the Lord knoweth who are his.' 2 Tim. ii. 19. Where this seal is said to have a double stamp or impress; on the one side it is, God is sure and faithful to his people; on the other side, his

people are true and faithful unto him; which being as it were engraven on a seal, may confirm us in the truth of both. Hence the servants of God are said to be 'sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.' Eph. i. 13.

Now, the use of a seal, you know, is to serve as a mark or character, whereby to know what is ours, or belongs to us. Thus when any wares or commodities are bought by any, he is wont to set his mark or seal to them, that they may be known to be his; and because men were as ordinarily bought and sold in those days, as any other goods or commodity, nothing was more ordinary than to set a mark or seal upon them, either in their forehead, or some other part, to distinguish them from all other men's servants. So Theophylact tells us in his notes on Rom. viii. 10, 'He that hath not the seal, is not the servant or goods of the master, which are commonly known by that mark.' St. John speaks of God the Father's sealing his Son, chap. vi. 27, 'Him hath God the Father sealed.' And that was his sending down his Holy Spirit, which 'in the shape of a dove lighted upon him; and a voice from heaven declaring him to be his beloved Son in whom he was well pleased.' Matt. iii. 16, 17. Which was the fulfilling of that prophecy of him, Isa. xlii. 1, 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth! I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles;' meaning, that by the seal of the Spirit, viz. its doctrine and miracles, Christ was demonstrated to be his especial anointed servant, to reveal the will of the Father, and to atone for the sins of the world. And by the same 'Spirit' all good Christians are said to be 'sealed to the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30; that is, to be set apart or marked up for the day of salvation. Suitable hereunto, the good angel here, that had the seal of the living God, is said to 'cry with a loud voice to the four other angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea; saying, Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.' The sense whereof is, that those destroying angels that had a commission to punish the inhabitants of Judea for their wickedness, should not proceed to any acts of vengeance, till the servants of God, that is, the true believers and sound Christians, received the seal of his Spirit; by that mark to be preserved from that common destruction, which was lighting upon others. By which we may see the great care that God Almighty takes to rescue his faithful servants from the judgments that befall impenitent sinners; for though his justice will not suffer him to acquit the guilty, yet he sheweth mercy unto thousands, in them that love him and keep his commandments. He would not bring a flood to drown the wicked world, till he had prepared an ark to save righteous Noah and his family, nor would he rain down fire and brimstone from heaven to consume the Sodomites, till he had given warning to righteous Lot to depart out of the

place, to escape the conflagration. When the destroying angel was commanded to smite the houses of the Egyptians with the pestilence, and to destroy the first-born, both of man and beast, God Almighty ordered that a mark or token should be set on the houses of the Israelites; to the end that seeing the mark, the destroying angel should pass over them, and save them from the destruction that befell the Egyptians; as we read in the twelfth chapter of Exodus.

In like manner, when the people of Judea were to be visited with a sore judgment, a good angel was commissioned to respite the execution; that the destroyers should not hurt the earth, or the sea, or any of the trees or fruits of the earth, 'till he had sealed the servants of God in the forehead,' to secure them from the common calamity. And St. John here tells us, that 'he heard the number of them which were sealed,' being in a vision represented to him; and the number of the sealed amounted to 'an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel.' Of each tribe were sealed 'twelve thousand,' as we find them particularly rehearsed in the four following verses.

From whence we may learn, that God ever had, and will still have a church or peculiar people to himself in the worst of times, and that no malice or persecution of enemies shall be ever able totally to extirpate or destroy it. The covenant he made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was, that he would be a God to them and their seed for ever, and that they and their posterity should be his people to all generations; and David brings in God Almighty declaring that he will 'keep mercy for them for evermore, and his covenant shall stand fast with them.' Psal. lxxxix. 29. No time or accident shall make him forget his promise, or suffer his truth to fail.

In the days of Ahab and Jezebel, such havoc was made of the priests, and the people fell so fast into idolatry, that Elijah thought all the good men were slain from off the earth, and that none of the faithful servants of God were left; but God told him otherwise, saying, 'Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, who have not bowed the knee to Baal, and whose mouths have not kissed him.' 1 Kings xix. 18.

In the general excision or rejection of the Jews for their infidelity, the Church of God did not wholly fail, but 'still a remnant was saved.' The bishop of Jerusalem told St. Paul of 'many thousand Jews that believed, being zealous for the law.' Acts xxi. 20. God will always have a church upon earth, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail; and if the powers of hell cannot overthrow it, we need not fear what earthly powers can do against it. Ezekiel in a vision heard a command from God to 'set a mark upon the foreheads of them that lamented the abominations of Jerusalem;' and though the destroyers were to smite others without sparing or pitying any, yet they were

'not to come near any man upon whom this mark was found;' as we read, Ezek. ix. 4, 5, 6. And here in this vision of St. John, before the destroying angels could hurt the earth or the sea, or punish any inhabitants of the land, a hundred and forty and four thousand were sealed in the forehead, to be saved by that mark from the common destruction that was coming upon the rest. And this is the first part of the epistle for this day; which contains the mercy and favour that God sheweth to his saints, in rescuing them from common dangers and judgments, and marking them up to eternal life; 'and such honour have all his saints.'

The second part of this day's epistle contains the praises and hallelujahs sung unto God both in earth and heaven, for this his signal care and coronation of his saints; which things were here in a vision farther represented to him.

'After this (saith he) I beheld, and lo! a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, kindreds and people, and tongues, stood before the throne,' &c. Where he speaks of the persons concerned in sounding forth those praises and hallelujahs here upon earth; and they were all those sound, pure, and faithful Christians, that received the seal or mark of God in their forehead: though they were men of all nations, kindreds and languages, dispersed abroad in the several parts and quarters of the world; yet St. John beheld them in a vision appearing before the 'throne of God, and standing before the Lamb, clothed with the white robes' of Christ's righteousness, and holding 'palms' of victory and triumph 'in their hands.'

In this posture they began their praises, 'crying with a loud voice, and saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.' Where they ascribe the honour of their deliverance to God the Father, by the means and merits of his Son; saying with David, 'Salvation belongeth unto the Lord, and his blessing is upon his people.' And as it is his proper work to save men, so all the praise and glory of it is due only to God; which they accordingly give and pay to him.

Next, He describes the rejoicing in heaven upon these occasions; where he beheld 'all the angels standing about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, who all fell before the throne on their faces,' in token of reverence to the Divine Majesty, 'whom they worshipped saying, Amen.' Assenting and joining together in the following words: 'Blessing and glory, and wisdom and thanksgiving, and honour and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.' Where we have the work and business of the saints and angels in heaven, who are continually employed in doxologies and hallelujahs, in celebrating the glory, and singing the praises of him that sitteth on the throne, and of the Lamb for evermore: which work, we as 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of the same household, and family of God,' are to begin here on earth, that we may be fitted

to join and bear a part with them in their songs of praise for ever in heaven.

This is the sum of the epistle for this day, wherein we commemorate the communion of saints both militant and triumphant; having all the same God and Christ, the same faith and hope, and sealed by the same Spirit. We are to remember the saints on earth, by praying for them, by sympathizing with them, and by affording our mutual aid and assistance to them in all the needful times of trouble.

Moreover, We are to commemorate the saints in heaven, by praising God for them, by congratulating their victories over all their ghostly enemies, and rejoicing in their happiness. But, above all, we are to propound to ourselves the example of their virtues for our imitation, that we may resemble them in grace here, that we may follow them to glory hereafter; being meek and humble, constant and persevering as they were, that we may be happy and blessed as they now are.

To which end, Let us walk in the light, as they are in the light; abhorring all the deeds of darkness, and treading in the steps of their holiness, that we may arrive at last to their happiness: for 'without holiness no man can or shall see the Lord.' We must strive against sin, which unfits us for the beatifical vision, and live as the saints of old did, to qualify us for those blessed regions to which they are already arrived: so shall we with the departed saints have our perfect consummation and bliss in his heavenly kingdom; which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXVII.

THE GOSPEL FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY.

MATTHEW v. 1—12.—*Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven: Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted: Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth: Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled: Blessed are the merciful,* &c.

IN the epistle for this day, in which we commemorate all the saints, we find God Almighty ordered a seal or mark to be set on his true and faithful servants; partly to distinguish them from the unsanctified herd of reprobate and wicked men; and partly to preserve them from the judgments and miseries that befall others.

In this gospel for the day, our Saviour treats of the same or like subject, marking out the persons that are entitled to this felicity. It begins with the occasion, time, and place where he

delivered these instructions. The occasion was his 'seeing the multitudes' flocking after him, and 'his disciples coming unto him.' The place was a mountain; 'He went up into a mountain:' that by the height of the place he might be the better heard and seen. The time was upon the entrance on his prophetic office, when 'He opened his mouth, and taught the people' the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The subject of his discourse in the gospel now read to us, is—

First, To publish the blessedness or glad tidings of the gospel. And,—

Secondly, To shew the qualifications of the persons to whom this blessedness belongs. Both which will direct us in some measure how to become saints here upon earth, and to be numbered at last among the saints in heaven. For if we have the seal of the Spirit stamped upon us, that is, the graces of the Spirit after mentioned, planted in us; the Lord will know and reckon us to be his; as by the sequel of this discourse will more fully appear.

First, then, what is the blessedness here published and proclaimed by our Saviour? Why, that is far greater than we can express or conceive, and cannot be fully known till we come to enjoy it: for 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the great things that God hath laid up for them that love him.' 'Now are we the sons of God (saith St. John) but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. 1 John iii. 1, 2. At present he hath adopted us into his family, and made us his children; but the greatness of the inheritance provided for us, is not yet fully revealed. St. Peter styles it 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.' 1 Pet. i. 4. In the enjoyment hereof, St. John tells us we 'shall become like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Our weak eyes are dazzled here with the brightness and splendour of his glory, but then we shall have such a transporting sight of him, as will transform us into the same image from glory to glory.

The Holy Scriptures set forth the blessedness of the saints in this future state, by the highest and greatest things that our most raised thoughts or desires can reach or aspire to. For they represent it,—

1st, Under the metaphor of a 'kingdom,' and that not like the kingdoms of the world, short, troublesome, and transitory; but a kingdom in heaven, that cannot be moved, or be taken from us.

Again, It is expressed sometimes by a 'crown,' not like earthly crowns, that are beset more with thorns than jewels, and rather wound than adorn the heads that wear them; but 'a crown of everlasting glory, a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away, a crown of life' that knows no end or decay, to which no earthly crowns or sceptres bear any proportion.

Moreover, the excellency of this blessedness is described by a 'treasure,' not like earthly treasures subject to the corruption of the moth and rust, and liable to the rapine of thieves and robbers; but 'a treasure in heaven that faileth not, and endures for ever:' in comparison whereof, all worldly treasures are but toys or trifles.

Lastly, To mention no more, the blessedness of the saints is set forth by a 'banquet' or 'feast' furnished with the most satisfying and never-failing dainties, with food that endures to eternal life, attended with fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore.

This, and infinitely more than we can ask or think, is the blessedness here published and promised by our Saviour to all his faithful servants and followers, of which the saints in heaven are already partakers.

In a word, this blessedness consists in a perfect freedom from all evil both of sin and suffering, and a complete fruition of all manner of good, that our natures are capable of receiving. So a voice from heaven describes the happiness of departed saints, Rev. xiv. 13, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.' Where by 'the dead that die in the Lord' are meant either those that die in the cause of the Lord, as all martyrs and confessors, or more generally all that die in the faith and fear of the Lord: whose blessedness is described to be partly privative, in resting from all the labours and pains, the toils and troubles of this world; and partly positive, in attaining to the reward of their good works, which will follow and crown them with everlasting glory and rest in the world to come.

But, Secondly, who are the persons to whom this blessedness belongs? or what are the graces of the Spirit, that seal and secure this happiness to them? Why, both those the following words will declare: and they are poverty of spirit, mourning for sin, meekness in governing our passions, hunger and thirst after righteousness, mercifulness to the miserable, purity of heart in all our doings, peacemakers in all differences, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake. To each of these blessedness is here expressly assigned and promised, together with the particular part or portion of it that belongs to them; for the persons in whom these graces are found, are pronounced blessed: and must therefore be briefly considered.

1st, I begin then with the first grace here mentioned, and that is poverty of spirit, with the blessedness assigned to the persons in whom it is found, in those words, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' Now, by this poverty of spirit we are not to understand such a pusillanimity or weakness of spirit, as renders men unwilling or unable to bear the crosses and hardships of this life, and so causes them to sink under the burthen of worldly troubles and afflictions: for this is such a meanness and dastardliness of spirit,

as is inconsistent with the duty and courage of a good Christian. Both Christ and his apostles forewarned us of troubles, to arm us with patience and resolution to bear them: 'In the world (saith Christ) ye shall have tribulation, but be of good comfort, I have overcome the world.' He would have us use our prudence, and to be 'wise as serpents,' to avoid all unnecessary trouble; but withal to use our patience, and 'be harmless as doves,' in bearing necessary and unavoidable evils. And St. Paul wills all good Christians to 'be strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus,' and to 'endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.' 2 Tim. ii. 1, 3. So that such a poorness or weakness of spirit, as faints or sinks under tribulation, is not the poverty of spirit here meant: but by it we are to understand a readiness of mind or spirit to bear poverty, to part with all worldly wealth at Christ's call, as the apostles did, and to be content to live poor and mean in this world, when our adhering to his cause requires it; and so it is opposed to all ambition or affectation of earthly greatness, and loving of mammon more than God.

Briefly, This poverty of spirit consists chiefly in an humble and lowly opinion of ourselves, thinking ourselves with Jacob to be 'less than the least of God's mercies,' and to deserve greater evils than are laid upon us; with St. Paul reckoning ourselves 'the least of saints, and the greatest of sinners:' contrary to that spiritual pride of the church of Laodicea, who thought themselves 'rich, increased in goods, and to have need of nothing;' when they were all the while 'poor and miserable, blind and naked,' lacking all things. Rev. iii. 17, 18. So that humility and lowliness of mind is the grace here meant by poverty of spirit; the being in our own conceit the least, lowest, and meanest of God's creatures, helpless as babes and impotent as children: which humble and child-like temper is prescribed by Christ, as absolutely necessary to a good Christian. Matt. xviii. 4. And he that is 'least in his own eyes, shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.' Luke ix. 48.

And this will lead to the blessedness here entailed upon the poor in spirit, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:' that is, the kingdom of grace here consists of such humble and lowly-minded Christians, who are the fittest to be received into the christian Church; 'for God giveth grace to the humble.' And the kingdom of glory hereafter is prepared for those who abound in this grace here: for 'he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.' The way to rise highest in God's esteem, is to be lowest in our own; and he that is least in his own eyes here on earth, shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

This is the first grace on which blessedness is entailed, to wit, lowliness or poverty of spirit; 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.' And indeed that is the foundation or seed-plot of all other virtues, which thrive best, when most deeply rooted in humility.

The 2d is mourning for sin, in those words: 'Blessed are they

that mourn, for they shall be comforted.' Where by mourning is not meant the grieving or sorrowing for any worldly matters; such as losses or crosses in our estate, indignities offered to our person, injustice to our goods, infamy to our name, and the like: the grieving for these things is that 'worldly sorrow' mentioned by the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 10, which when too much indulged or yielded to, 'worketh death.' But the mourning here meant is a contrition or grief of heart arising from a sense of the sins or iniquities we have committed. This is that 'godly sorrow' mentioned in the same chapter, that 'worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of;' ver. 10; called there likewise a sorrowing after a godly sort.

Now this mourning is first and chiefly for our own sins, whereby we have highly offended a gracious God, by violating the authority of his laws, and breaking through all the obligations of his love and kindness. Next we are to mourn for the sins of others, especially if they be public and national; for they incense the wrath of God, and pull down his judgments upon us. Hence we find David first lamenting his own sins of murder and adultery with bitter tears of sorrow and repentance, Psal. li. and after tells us, how much he was 'grieved for the transgressors,' and that 'rivers of tears ran down his eyes, because they kept not God's law.' Psal. cxix. 136. The prophet Jeremy wished his 'head were water, and his eyes a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the sins of the people.' Jer. ix. 1. And Peter, after the denying his Master, went out and 'wept bitterly.' Now when we are thus deeply affected with sorrow and contrition for our own and others' transgressions, then are we reckoned in the number of 'mourners,' who are here pronounced 'blessed;' and that because 'they shall be comforted.' Their mourning shall be repaired at present with inward comfort, and their sadness shall be rewarded with future and endless joy. So Lazarus 'was comforted,' when the rich man 'was tormented.' They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; such as now go on their way weeping, and bear good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring their sheaves with them. Psal. cxxvi. 6, 7.

3dly, Another grace to which blessedness is promised, is meekness; 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' Where by meekness we understand such a mildness and quietness of spirit, as is free from all pride, passion or prejudice, and whatever else is apt to disturb the public or private peace. It is a virtue that consists chiefly in the well ordering or governing our passions, keeping them within due bounds, and not suffering them to run into extravagance or success. So that meekness makes us ever ready and willing to submit to God's will in all things, without murmuring or complaining; to live in all due obedience to superiors, without any stubbornness or opposition; to live easily and quietly with neighbours, without molesting or contending with them about trifles or small trespasses; to bless

and pray for enemies, without studying any revenge; to be loving and courteous to friends: and, in a word, to be humble, modest, and civil to all men, doing none an ill turn, but ready to do any good office to all; not breaking into causeless anger, nor running into rage or fury with any, but being mild, gentle, and condescending to every one.

This is the nature of meekness, to which a blessing is here assigned; 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' By inheriting the earth, in the Old Testament, is meant prosperity in the land of Canaan; where long life and a rich portion of earthly good things was thought the greatest blessedness. And if we observe the ordinary course of Divine Providence, we shall find prosperity and long life to be ordinarily the meek man's portion. He feels a constant calm in his breast, when others are ruffled with the storms of anger, pride, and revenge. He finds a blessing and success in all his honest enterprises, when others meet with disappointment and a curse: for God's delight is in the humble and meek, to bless and prosper them in all their ways; which is expressed here by 'inheriting the earth,' or enjoying with comfort that part of it which falls to their lot, as an earnest or pledge of a far better and never-fading inheritance in heaven.

4thly, Our Saviour pronounces them 'blessed who do hunger and thirst after righteousness,' with a promise that 'they shall be filled.' Where by righteousness we are to understand both an inherent righteousness, consisting in the sanctifying graces of the Spirit planted in us, and the seeds of a holy life; and the imputed righteousness of Christ accepted as ours, whereby we obtain pardon of our sins, and acceptance of our persons and services.

To 'hunger and thirst' after righteousness, signifies an eager appetite and desire of both; longing for grace as the spiritual food and nourishment of the soul, and panting for pardon as the hart panteth after the water-brook, to refresh and comfort it.

They that do so are here called 'blessed,' and that because 'they shall be filled.' Their most eager appetite after grace shall be abundantly satisfied, and their most enlarged desires for mercy and pardon shall be fully answered. Accordingly good men find great satisfaction in a life of grace here, and will find infinitely more in a life of glory hereafter. 'Open thy mouth wide (saith God to the Israelites), and I will fill it.' Psal. lxxxi. 11. God is able to supply the wants, and satisfy the largest cravings of the soul; which is more than the whole world and all things in it are able to do. For he that hungers after wealth or power, never finds he hath enough; and he that thirsts for the honours and pleasures of the world, is never satisfied with either: the hunger and thirst still increase upon him, the desire ever out-runs the enjoyment, and the more they have, the more they crave. But God hath all fulness in himself, and can alone derive it to his creatures; he is able to give more than we can ask or

think, and so can fill up the utmost cravings and capacities of the soul: which should make us all hunger and thirst after him and his righteousness; and that will give us solid peace and satisfaction here, and everlasting content and happiness hereafter.

5thly, Another grace on which blessedness is entailed, is that of mercifulness; 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Now this mercifulness is such a gracious disposition of soul, as inclines it to pity and shew mercy to the needy and distressed; and that consists chiefly in two things, to wit, in giving and forgiving.

That of giving is the relieving the wants of the poor and indigent, by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and doing all good offices both to their souls and bodies.

That of forgiving relates to the injuries and wrongful dealings of men, and consists in passing by lesser injuries and indignities, without meditating revenge or reparation, and not suffering little trespasses to lessen or cool our charity; but to be tenderly affected towards all men both good and bad, and to be ever ready to shew mercy to the miserable. These our Saviour here pronounces blessed, saying, 'Blessed are the merciful;' adding this reason, 'For they shall obtain mercy.' There is mercy in store for them that shew mercy, but they 'shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy.' The merciful man is blessed partly in this life, by the inward delight and pleasure that proceeds from well-doing, and the likeness he hath to God in imitating his darling attribute and perfection of shewing mercy; and partly in the world to come, when he shall be sure to obtain mercy at God's hand, and be amply rewarded for all the mercy and goodness he hath shewed here.

6thly, Another grace to which blessedness is annexed, is purity of heart; saying, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Where purity of heart signifies,—

1. Sincerity and singleness of heart, in opposition to all guile and hypocrisy. As wine is said to be pure when it is purged from the lees, and metals when refined from the dross; so is the heart said to be pure, when it is free from the base ends and alloys of hypocrisy, and does all things with a clear and plain simplicity. Again,—

2. Purity in heart is sometimes taken for a spotless chastity and cleanness of mind, in opposition to carnality and the pollution of fleshly lusts. As water is said to be pure, when it is clear and unmixt, and free from mud and defilement, so a pure heart is cleansed from all sensual and carnal impurities. This David prayed for, Psal. li. 'Create in me a clean heart, O God,' &c. And God Almighty called upon his own people to 'wash their hearts from wickedness, that vain thoughts might not lodge within them.' Jer. iv. 14. They that are thus pure in heart, are pronounced blessed, because 'they shall see God.' The vision

and enjoyment of God is the highest degree of happiness that we can aspire or attain to; for that contains and includes in it all manner of blessedness, that our nature is capable of. Now none but the pure in heart are capable of seeing God, for God is a spirit, and cannot be seen by our carnal eyes: our mind must be purified, and in a manner spiritualized for that vision; for 'without holiness (saith the apostle), no man can see the Lord.' Heb. xii. 14.

7thly, Peace-making is another virtue, to which blessedness is promised; saying, 'Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.' Where, by peace-making, is meant peaceable-mindedness, or a strong inclination to promote the public and private peace of kingdoms and neighbourhoods; endeavouring, by all prudent and possible ways, to preserve it where it is, and to recover it where it is wanting. They that do so, are here 'called the children of God:' they resemble God in his attributes of charity and goodness, as children do their parents in the features of their faces. God is styled the 'God of peace,' and sometimes the 'Author of peace, and the Lover of concord:' and they that make peace and reconcile differences, are called the sons of peace, and the children of God, who shall enjoy everlasting peace and rest with him.

Lastly, The eighth beatitude belongs to those that 'are persecuted for righteousness' sake,' and such as 'are reviled falsely for Christ's sake:' to the one belongs 'the kingdom of heaven,' and to the other 'a great reward in heaven.' And therefore both of them are bid to 'rejoice and be exceeding glad;' for whether they are persecuted by the hand or the tongue, they shall be no losers by either, but great gainers by both. Nor are they to think it any strange or new thing, 'for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' yea, Christ himself suffered this way, and was 'made perfect by sufferings;' for he endured the cross and despised the shame, before he received the crown, and sat down at the right hand of his Father. And all the glorified saints and martyrs, now in heaven, tasted of the same cup, and arrived to heaven the same way.

Thus we see the qualifications of the persons to whom blessedness belongs, or the gifts and graces of the Spirit whereby we are 'sealed to the day of redemption:' which divine graces let us all labour and pray for, to fit us for glory, and to make us 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' To which God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the merits of Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, might, majesty, and dominion, world without end. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXVIII.

AN EXHORTATION TO CONSTANCY AND PERSEVERANCE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

HEBREWS x. 23.—*Let us hold fast the profession of the faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.*

THESE words are an exhortation to constancy and perseverance in the christian faith: it was directed first and chiefly to these converted Hebrews, who though they had embraced the christian faith, yet were not wholly come off from an opinion and observance of the legal rites and sacrifices; and so were halting and wavering between the law and the gospel.

To remove this instability, the author of this epistle endeavours to set them right in this matter; and, to that end, lets them know the transcendent excellency of Christ, both in his nature and office, 'above the angels;' and likewise his great fidelity above that of Moses, 'the one being faithful as a son, the other as a servant.' After which, he shews the great pre-eminence of Christ's priesthood, who 'was a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck;' above all the Levitical order of priests, which was but temporary, and after the order of Aaron. And from thence infers, how much greater heed is to be given to the words spoken by Christ, than by any other, either angels or men: which things he proves at large in the foregoing chapters.

In this chapter, whereof our text is a part, he shews how vastly Christ's sacrifice of himself under the gospel, exceeds all the sacrifices under the law; which were but so many types and shadows of his, and so were all completed in him, and to cease at his coming. Moreover,—

The legal sacrifices consisting in the blood of bulls and goats, had not value or virtue enough 'to do away sin,' or 'to make the comers thereunto perfect;' and by reason of their imperfection were to be often repeated: but Christ, by one offering of himself under the gospel, hath made full satisfaction for sin, and 'perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' And so there can be no need of repeating such an all-sufficient and meritorious sacrifice: for whereas the high-priest went once every year into the holy of holies with the blood of expiation, Christ is 'gone into heaven once for all, there to appear in the presence of God for us;' by which 'he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, since he ever liveth to make intercession for them.'

From all which he exhorts, in the verses before the text, to come with boldness to the throne of grace, 'by a new and living way, consecrated through the veil of Christ's flesh; and to draw nigh with a true heart in full assurance of faith.' And that we may not be misled or drawn out of the way, he wills us, in the

words of our text, to 'hold fast this profession of the faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised.'

In which words we have,—

I. A strict charge to 'hold fast the profession of faith without wavering.' And,—

II. A strong reason to back and enforce it; because 'he is faithful that promised.'

I begin with the first of these; in treating whereof, it will be requisite to shew,—

First, What we are to understand by 'the profession of the faith.'

Secondly, What is meant by 'holding it fast.' And,—

Thirdly, What by holding it fast 'without wavering.'

To which I shall add, what great reason we have to stick firm to it; together with the manner and means how we may be best enabled so to do. Of which particularly.

First, then, What is this 'profession of faith' which we are to hold fast? For the better clearing hereof, we must note that faith is sometimes taken for the act of faith, by which we believe or assent to the truth of any thing upon the report or testimony of another. And according to the different kinds of testimony, there result different kinds of faith: to believe upon the witness of men, is a human faith; and is that by which we govern ourselves in the affairs of this world: to believe upon the witness of God, which is greater, is a divine faith; and is that by which we act in the greater concerns of another life. And such was his in the gospel, who said, 'Lord, I believe, help my unbelief!' which relates chiefly to the act of believing. Matt. ix. 24.

Again, faith is sometimes taken for the object of faith, or the thing believed or assented to. And so it is understood in all those Scriptures, which speak of 'preaching the faith, contending for the faith, holding the faith,' and the like; which are principally meant of the object of faith, or thing believed, viz. the doctrine of the gospel delivered by Christ and his apostles, and confirmed by those unquestionable miracles, that plainly proved it came from God.

By the profession of this faith is meant the owning, publishing, and declaring those divine truths thus revealed and confirmed to us: for a man may assent to the truth of a thing in his own mind, without publishing or declaring it to others. The one is that immanent and internal act of the soul, that is known only to God and our own conscience; for none but 'God can search the secrets of the heart,' and 'who knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him?' The other is that external act of the tongue, whereby our faith is made known unto men; and this is that which is here styled 'the profession of faith.'

Now both these are required of us, and by the apostle made necessary to salvation, Rom. x. 8—10: 'The word is nigh thee,

even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach, That if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Where the outward confession of the mouth is joined with the inward confession of the heart: and 'if we thus confess Christ before men here on earth, he will confess us before his Father which is in heaven.' Matt. x. 32.

Now, because these divine truths which we are to believe and confess, lie scattered up and down in sacred writ, so as not to be easily discerned by vulgar minds, nor distinguished from matters of lesser moment; therefore they have been briefly comprised in that excellent summary of the christian faith, known by the name of the Apostles' Creed; so called, because (as most think) it was drawn up and framed by the apostles as a rule of faith to be delivered and taught by them in all places where they came; or, as others think, because it was gathered out of the apostles' writings, as consonant to, and containing the whole substance of what they delivered.

But however that be, most certain it is, that the Church hath ever owned and received it as the Apostles' Creed, and hath exacted from all its members an open belief and profession of it.

This is that 'one faith' mentioned by St. Paul, Ephes. iv. 5; and 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' mentioned by St. Jude, ver. 3. To this the apostles in their writings frequently allude and refer. In the Epistle to the Romans it is called, 'the form of doctrine delivered to them,' chap. vi. 17. In another place, it is styled 'the analogy, that is, the measure and proportion of faith,' chap. xii. 6. In the Epistle to Timothy, it is called 'the form of sound words.' 2 Tim. i. 13. And elsewhere, 'the *depositum*, or good thing committed to his charge.' 1 Tim. vi. 21.

In this short summary of the christian faith, we are taught what to believe of the Three Persons in the blessed Trinity; to wit, to ascribe our creation to God the Father, our redemption to God the Son, and our sanctification to God the Holy Ghost. Adding our faith in one holy and catholic church; in which we believe one communion of saints, blessed with the forgiveness of sins here in this life, and, after the resurrection from the dead, with life everlasting. This is briefly the faith here referred to in our text; which, because we solemnly confess in our baptism, and daily rehearse in our prayers, is here styled 'the profession of faith.'

Secondly, But what is it to 'hold fast' this profession of faith? This we are often called upon to do: 'Hold faith and a good conscience, (saith St. Paul to Timothy,) which some having put away, concerning the faith have made shipwreck.' And elsewhere,

'Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus; holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience.' 1 Tim. iii. 9.

Now the holding fast, in all those places, implies in it something negative, and something positive.

The negative part is, not to depart or revolt from this faith, nor at any time to deny or decline the owning of it before men, when thereunto called.

The positive part of it is, to stand firm and steadfast in the belief of our creed, and constantly to adhere to the profession and practice of what is required in it.

1. I say, to hold fast the profession of faith, is not to depart or revolt from it; to be neither drawn away by the smiles, nor deterred from it by the frowns of the world. We read of some who followed our Saviour for the loaves, and kept with him, whilst any thing could be gotten by it; but when that failed, they utterly forsook and walked no more with him. The allurements of profit and preferment have a mighty influence on the minds of men; and the bias of interest draws very strongly, which way soever it inclines. There are many that will stick to the Church in the sunshine of prosperity, when they can partake of its endowments and plenty; who yet can easily leave it in time of adversity, when the clouds gather and threaten; and 'when trouble and tribulation arise because of the word, by and by they are offended.' The apostle speaks of some who 'make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,' and cast away that in a storm of persecution, which they seem to admire and adhere to in calm and halcyon days. Such as these court religion not for the beauty, but the dowry of it; and when that is gone, can see no form or comeliness in it, that it should be desired. This is not to hold fast, but to let go the faith, and betrays an evil heart of unbelief, that draws into infidelity or apostasy.

2. To hold fast the profession of faith, is never to deny or decline the owning of it, when thereunto called; nor shrink from it, for the fear or favour of any: but to 'be ready always (as St. Peter advises) to give an account of the faith and hope that is in you with meekness and fear,' 1 Pet. iii. 15: that is, not to be backward to own and assert the faith you profess, even before governors, with that meekness and modesty that becometh the disciples of Christ. This is to confess Christ before men, to which he so far encouraged his disciples, that if they were at any time 'brought before magistrates or kings for his sake, they should take no thought how or what they should speak; for it should be given them in that hour what they should say.' Matt. x. 19.

And though we may not always expect such extraordinary and supernatural assistance in such cases, yet we may depend upon sufficient spiritual aid to bear us up, and bring us off, on such occasions.

And how suspicious soever we may be of our own abilities, yet if we keep close to our duty and the cause of Christ, the Spirit of God will enable us to speak what is fit and proper to be spoken: and sure they that have God to enable and direct them, need not fear they shall want answers and assistance in the greatest difficulties. For the apostle assures us, that 'his grace shall be sufficient for us,' and that 'he will not suffer us to be tempted or tried above that we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.' 1 Cor. x. 13.

This is the negative part or thing forbidden in the text; to wit, not to desert the faith by any cowardice or apostasy, nor to decline the asserting of it in times of greatest danger and difficulty.

The positive part of it is, to continue firm and steadfast in the belief of our creed; and to persevere in the practice of what is implied and enjoined in it.

(1.) I say, to hold fast the profession of faith, is to stand firm and steadfast in the belief of it. The first thing that Christ requires of his disciples, is to believe in him, to be fully persuaded of the Divinity of his person, and the infallibility of his doctrine; both which, the many miracles and wonderful works he did, may justly challenge and exact from them: for as he spake as never man spake, for the excellency of his doctrine; so he confirmed all by works that never man did, for the number and greatness of them; and by both seemed not so much to beg as to enforce our assent to the truth of all that he delivered. And that we might not be to seek what or how much to believe, he hath thoroughly instructed us in all the necessary points and articles of faith; to which therefore we are to stand as firm and unshaken as a rock: and having so full and complete a model of our faith, we are to keep close to it, so as to believe all that is contained in it, and no more: for we may err as much in the excess, by believing too much, as in the defect, by believing too little; as we may swerve from a rule, as well by going beyond or beside it, as by coming too short of it.

Would any then tempt you to atheism, by denying the being and providence of God? Manfully withstand all such bold assaults, by adhering to the first article of your creed, wherein you profess to believe one almighty and independent Being, who made all things by his power, and still preserves them by his providence; and, 'take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.'

Would any draw you into deism, by denying the Lord that bought you, and calling in question the deity of our Saviour, and the efficacy of his satisfaction? Resolutely resist all such attempts, by sticking close to the following articles, wherein you profess to believe all that Christ did and suffered for man's redemption.

Again, would any draw you from the one communion of the

catholic Church, or seduce you into schism and separation from that sound part of it established among you? Be not carried away by such delusions, nor run into sects and divisions under a pretence of christian liberty: but with the primitive Christians 'continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and prayer.'

And as we may not come short of or diminish our creed, by believing less; so neither are we to add to or go beyond it, by believing more: so that if any would obtrude any new doctrines upon us as points of faith, or impose new austerities in point of practice, we are not to receive but reject them; and instead of accepting their persons, to account them accursed; Gal. i.8,9; which is one main thing implied in 'holding fast the profession of faith.'

(2.) The last, but none of the least things implied in it, is a constant adherence to the practice of those duties and virtues which the profession of it obliges to, and requires of us: for the christian faith is not a mere notional speculation, that rests only in the brain to inform the mind; but a practical science, that influences the heart, and guides the conversation.

'To believe in God,' is not barely to entertain our mind with a barren notion of his being, or to use our reason in running up second causes, till we arrive at the first cause of all things, but to be a fruitful principle of virtue and good works; to let us know our dependence upon him, to honour his holy name and word, and to serve him truly all the days of our life.

'To believe in Christ,' is not merely to wear about an empty name or title of Christians; but to put our full trust and affiance in him, and to observe all the laws and precepts prescribed by him for the conduct of our actions.

The belief of his birth and incarnation is designed to teach us humility and condescension; his sufferings, patience; his resurrection from the dead, the rising again to newness of life; his ascension into heaven, heavenly-mindedness; and his coming to judgment, to put us in mind of preparing for it.

In a word, there is no article of our faith but instils into us some important lesson, and exacts some necessary duty from us; which, while we profess to believe, we tie ourselves to the obedience to, and observance of it. So that to hold fast our profession, is to keep our creed whole and entire, to make it the rule and measure of our faith, and to live in the love and practice of those graces and virtues that are comprehended in, and commanded by it: for we let go our profession by falling into heresies and divisions on the one hand, or into vices and corruption of manners on the other; and by both we are 'carried away with the error of the wicked, and fall from our own steadfastness.' In short then, to 'keep the faith,' is not only to believe aright, but to live suitably to it; to answer and adorn our profession, and to stand firm upon the basis of truth and righteousness. This is briefly 'to hold fast the profession of faith.' But,—

Thirdly, What is it to hold it fast 'without wavering?' Why, wavering we know is such an instability and unsettledness of mind, as causes men to fluctuate in doubts and uncertainties, and 'like children to be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.' It is a metaphor taken from the waves of the sea, which by the impetuous motion and stirring of the waters, rage and swell, and are carried contrary ways by the variable course and violence of the wind. 'He that wavereth (saith St. James), is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.' chap. i. 6.

They that do so in matters of religion, are by the same apostle styled, 'Double-minded men, that are unstable in all their ways,' ver. 8, for having no steady rule of action, they vary and turn with the wind and tide of human affairs; and moving only by the wheels of interest, they wind and wheel about as the world drives them. Of this sort are they that halt between two opinions, being uncertain which to embrace or stick to. We read of some in the Old Testament that halted between 'God and Baal;' and of others in the New Testament, that wavered between the 'law and the gospel.' In our days there are some that halt between God and Mammon, and others that waver between the Church and the conventicle: which things have begot that giddiness and instability in religion, which is the great misery and malady of the present age; wherein many have run from one sect to another, till they have run themselves out of all religion, and fallen at last into the gulf of Atheism, from whence few return.

Wavering then denotes uncertainty and inconstancy; the one consists in doubting, the other in denying the truth of the gospel; and both lead to the disbelief and decay of all religion: for he that is uncertain of the way, will either lose or wander in it; and he that is faint and inconstant in it, will neither reach to the end, nor receive the reward of it. So that to hold fast the profession of faith 'without wavering,' is firmly to adhere to the doctrine of Christ, and to be constant in the profession and practice of Christianity; not entertaining any doubts, whether God's ways or ours are best, nor leaving the communion of the catholic Church for the conventicles of sectaries, or dividing the one body of Christ by schisms and separations from it; but with a steady and resolved mind to stick to the rules of our Saviour, and the truths delivered by him.

But why are we called upon thus to hold fast the profession of faith 'without wavering?' Why,—

1st, Because, as sad experience shews, too many among us easily let it go and fall from it; and not only so, but seek to draw others into their pernicious and ungodly ways. This is St. Jude's argument for 'contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints,' because 'there were certain persons crept in unawares, who were of old ordained to condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the

only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ;' ver. 3, 4. These were the persons spoken of by St. Peter, who 'privily brought in damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them.' 2 Pet. ii. 1. And as he there foretold, that 'many would follow their pernicious ways,' so is it sadly verified in our times; wherein many have revolted from the faith, and fallen into dangerous errors and heresies; some saying with them in Job, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' chap. xxi. 14; others confessing him with their mouth, but in their deeds denying him; others again subverting the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, and undermining many other articles of the christian faith.

It is time then for us to look to our standing, when so many apostatize and fall away; to beware of all stumbling-blocks that may lie in our way, and to watch against all the occasions of falling; that we be neither drawn aside from the faith by the flatteries, nor driven from it by the frowns of the world, but may remain firm and unshaken in the greatest concussions. Steadiness in a storm is the best way to weather and get out of it; whereas wavering and instability is the ready way to shipwreck and ruin. And this will lead me to a

2d Argument for holding fast the profession of faith without wavering; and that is taken from the great danger of apostasy, or falling away from it. To depart from the Church, and the faith professed in it, is to 'deny Christ before men;' and 'them that do so, will Christ surely deny before his Father and the holy angels.' Matt. x. 33. Luke xii. 9. Now Christ's denying them before his Father, is his disowning and rejecting them at the last day, when he will say to them, 'I know you not, depart from me, ye workers of iniquity:' and what a dreadful sound will that be in the ears of such impenitent sinners, to hear those heart-breaking words from the mouth of our Saviour himself! when he, who alone can help, will disclaim all knowledge of them; and he, from whom all hopes of mercy can come, will bid them begone for ever from his presence. What inexpressible horror and trembling must seize their guilty souls, to hear that doleful sentence of condemnation pronounced against them, 'Depart from me, ye cursed,' &c. where every word will be like a dagger piercing the heart, or like an arrow striking through the reins! If Peter's short denial of Christ cost him so many bitter tears of sorrow, when there was room left for repentance, what anguish and bitterness of soul must for ever possess such despairing wretches, when there can be no hope or space for amendment! Moreover,—

Christ's 'denying them before his Father and the holy angels,' will mightily increase the shame and terror of their punishment. It is some allay to the misery and infamy of suffering, to perish unobserved; but to be made an eternal spectacle of folly and misery before angels and men, cannot but extremely heighten the

sting and horror of damnation: which is enough to deter us from disowning or denying of Christ for any terrors or temptations whatever.

3dly, As the danger of deserting and denying of Christ is thus dreadful, so is the benefit and blessedness of believing and confessing of him no less great and inexpressible; for 'he that confesseth me before men (saith Christ), him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven.' To keep the profession of faith without wavering, is to confess Christ before men, the reward whereof will be Christ's confessing all such before his Father in heaven: for at the last and great day of judgment, he will step down from his throne, and as it were taking them by the hand, will present such confessors to his Father, saying, Father, these have been my true and faithful servants, that have owned and stuck to me in the sharpest trials; no troubles or tribulations from the world could draw them from me; no bonds or imprisonment, no, nor death itself could make them deny me: I will therefore that these may be where I am, and that now a distinction be made between them that have continued with me, and them that have forsaken me, that the one may 'go into life everlasting, and the other into everlasting punishment.' And now, O Father, glorify them in heaven, who have glorified thee on earth, that they who have suffered with and for me, may likewise reign with me, and behold the glory which thou hast given me. And then ascending the throne again, he will say unto them, "Come, ye blessed children of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world;' where every word will mightily enhance the joy, and add to their happiness: for when the wicked are bid to be 'gone,' these are invited to 'come' to him; and the 'curse' pronounced on the former, is turned into a 'blessing' to the latter; instead of the 'everlasting fire,' to which the deniers of Christ are doomed, the confessors of him shall 'receive an everlasting kingdom,' which shall not be taken from them. And as the former was 'prepared for the devil and his angels,' to whose wretched company the revolters from the faith will be for ever sentenced; so was the latter 'prepared of the Father before the foundation of the world,' for all that firmly adhere to him, whose blessed presence and society they shall for ever enjoy in the highest heavens; which is abundant encouragement to 'hold fast the profession of faith without wavering.'

But how may we be enabled so to do?

This is the last thing propounded to be spoken to; which being a matter so well worthy to be known, I must crave a little more of your patience, whilst I prescribe a few directions and motives to that purpose. And the

1st, And great direction to this end, is frequent and fervent prayer unto God for grace to persevere in the faith, and to be preserved from apostasy. We cannot stand firm in it by our

own strength, but must be held up by a divine hand to be kept from falling; so St. Peter tells us, 'We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' 1 Pet. i. 5. We are daily beset with so many enemies and temptations from within and without, that we stand in continual need of God's grace to be delivered from or supported under them. The devil is ever busy to raise doubts and scruples in our minds, to betray us into infidelity. 'Satan hath desired to have thee (saith Christ to St. Peter) that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,' Luke xxii. 31, 32; where prayer is shewed to be the best preservative of our faith against the wiles of the devil. The world too hath charms of pleasure and profit to allure, and storms of persecution and trouble to affright us from the truth; and our own corrupt hearts are too apt to join issue with them, and to yield us up to the power of their temptations: so that it is absolutely necessary to implore the succour and assistance of Divine grace, to help us in these straits, and to carry us safe through all these difficulties. And to our unfeigned prayers we are,

2dly, To add our best endeavours to this purpose, not only by withstanding the wiles of the devil, but by watching against the charms and snares of the world, and the evil suggestions of our own hearts: we must labour to mortify all inordinate love of worldly interest, and to be at a holy indifference about the things of this life. This is indeed a hard lesson, which yet must be learnt by all Christ's disciples, who must deny themselves, to be kept from denying their Saviour: for 'no man can serve two masters; the loving of the one will be the hating of the other, and the holding to one will be the despising of the other: ye cannot serve God and mammon.' He that is immoderately addicted to earthly things, will easily break through all obligations to religion and virtue to attain his ends, and leave his Saviour to compass his secular designs. 'Demas hath forsaken us (saith St. Paul), having loved this present world.' And therefore to keep steady to the faith, we must wean our hearts from the world, which is apt to inveigle and draw too strongly from it.

3dly, To continue steadfast in the faith, carefully avoid all unnecessary disputes and vain janglings about sacred matters; for those eat out the substance of religion, and destroy charity, the bond of perfectness. It was St. Paul's advice to Timothy, that to 'keep the faith,' he should 'avoid all profane and vain babblings and oppositions of science, falsely so called, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith.' 1 Tim. vi. 21. Hymeneus and Philetus, by giving heed to these things, came to deny the resurrection; and the scoffers derided Christ's coming to judgment. And the unhappy disputes of our times have shaken the faith of many, some calling in question the authors, and others the Articles of the Creed; by which the christian faith is either maimed or corrupted: which should teach us to forbear

'all striving about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.'

Lastly, To preserve the faith, labour to get and keep a good conscience, and beware of allowing yourself in the love or practice of any known sin; for that, if indulged, will not only weaken, but wear off the impressions of religion, and lead to the sink of atheism. A good life is the best prop and security of our faith: and when all is done, he is the best champion and assertor of the truth, who squares his life by the rules of it. Faith and a good conscience ever go together, and he that lets go the one, commonly makes shipwreck of the other; for every known allowed sin makes a party against the faith; and men generally fall into foul errors, when they fall into looseness and corruption of manners. Our Saviour tells us, 'that he that doth the will of his Father, he shall know the truth.' God is willing to direct and keep those in the right, who are willing to know the way that they should go; but he leaves those that forsake him, to fall and perish by their own folly. Know then, my brethren, that your true interest lies on the side of religion, the practice whereof will keep you firm and tight to the christian faith; otherwise it will be hard for you to preserve the belief of that which makes against you: for as men easily believe what they desire, so are they difficultly brought to believe that which it is their interest to deny.

Upon the whole, then, let me exhort you to the great duty of the text, to 'hold fast the profession of faith without wavering;' considering,—

1st, That the christian faith is a sacred trust or depositum committed to your charge, and therefore ought to be carefully preserved. Every honest man takes himself bound to discharge a trust reposed in him, and faithfully to keep what is committed to his care. Why, the christian faith is a matter of trust put into our hands, and by our professing it, we have taken the charge of it; and it is indeed the richest jewel that Christ ever bestowed on his Church. Let us then hold fast this noble and excellent prize, and not tamely yield it up, or suffer it to be taken from us. 'O Timothy (saith St. Paul), keep that which is committed to thy trust!' meaning that faith or form of sound words, wherein he had been instructed. 1 Tim. vi. 20. It is base and perfidious to betray a trust, or embezzle goods committed to our custody. Let us not then truck away the christian faith for a little paltry pelf, nor part with this pearl of great price for the gratifying a base lust; but let us preserve it with diligence, and persevere in it to the end. To effect which, let us,—

2dly, Call to mind the solemn engagement made in our baptism, to believe all the Articles of the christian faith, and as Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to continue steadfast in it to our lives' end: let us not, then, revolt from it, or turn renegadoes to those enemies we have solemnly renounced.

3dly, Let us consider the firmness and constancy of the apostles and primitive Christians to the profession of their faith; that no threats, terrors, or tortures could make them deny or start from it; and let us tread in the steps of those our forerunners in the faith.

Lastly, To encourage us hereunto, let us often look up to the glory to which they are arrived, and have an eye to the recompense of reward that will follow; that so running with patience the race that is set before us, we may ere long receive the glorious prize set at the end of it: which God grant for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCLXXXIX.

AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO A STEADFAST ADHERING TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AND THE FAITH PROFESSED IN IT.

HEBREWS x. 23, latter part.—*For he is faithful that promised.*

THESE words are an argument to back and enforce the foregoing exhortation, to 'hold fast the profession of the faith without wavering,' or warping from it. The sense and meaning whereof, together with motives to encourage, and directions to be enabled so to do, was the subject of the preceding discourse.

But because some may distrust the soundness and security of the Church, and others be discouraged by the difficulty of preserving the faith professed in it, and the great opposition made against both; the apostle here minds us of the power and goodness of God, who hath promised to direct the one, and likewise of his truth and faithfulness, who hath engaged to protect the other; both which are implied in these words, 'He is faithful that promised.' Where we may observe,—

First, Something supposed; to wit, that God hath promised to preserve his Church, and the christian faith professed in it.

Secondly, Something expressed; namely, that he is faithful that hath promised it, and is both able and willing to perform it.

Thirdly, Something to be inferred from both; to wit, that we may safely rely upon the truth of his promises, and depend upon him for the fulfilling of his word.

First, I say, it is implied here, that God hath promised to preserve his Church, and the christian faith established in it. If we consult the book of God, and the history of former times, we shall find many plain promises to that purpose, with many acts and instances of the Divine power and providence to confirm them.

In the Old Testament we read of God's promising to 'bless Abraham,' the father of the faithful, and 'all the nations of the earth in his seed.' Gen. xii. The same promise was renewed to 'Isaac and his seed,' and likewise to 'Jacob and his sons,' who

were the Israelites, whom God made choice of for his peculiar people; taking them into covenant with himself, and promising to be 'their God,' and they to be 'his people.'

This was, then, the Church of God, which he engaged to preserve and protect from all their enemies. And this he did, by delivering them first out of the bondage of Egypt, and out of the hands of Pharaoh and his cruel task-masters, by his own almighty arm.

After which, he blessed them with prosperity and success in all their undertakings; insomuch that when Balak hired Balaam the sorcerer to 'curse' the people of Israel, he was forced to 'bless them altogether;' saying, 'Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel! And from this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought?' Numb. xxiii. 23.

The prophet Isaias brings in God Almighty thus declaring of his Church, which he calls his vineyard: 'I the Lord will keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any should hurt it, I will keep it night and day,' chap. xxvii. 3. 'And he that keepeth Israel (saith the Psalmist) will neither slumber nor sleep,' but his watchful eye will be still awake for their security. In another place he tells us, that 'no weapon,' either of power or policy, 'formed against his church, shall prosper; and every tongue that riseth up against it, shall be condemned,' chap. liv. 17. For 'I (saith the Lord) will be a wall of fire round about it, and the glory in the midst of it;' I will keep it under the shadow of my wings, and no evil shall approach to hurt it. Zech. ii. 5.

These are some of the many promises extant in the Old Testament, concerning God's great care in establishing and preserving his Church; which was then confined to the Jewish nation only, but is now extended to the uttermost parts of the earth. Since which, we find,—

In the New Testament, many rich and precious promises to the same purpose, viz. that God will defend his Church against all its enemies, and preserve the faith professed in it from all that seek to destroy or undermine it; of which our Saviour's words to St. Peter is an eminent instance; for when he made that famous confession of his faith in him, saying, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,' our Saviour, after a high commendation of his faith, told him, that 'upon this confession of his,' as 'upon a rock, he would build his church, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it,' Matt. xvi. 18: where the 'gates' denote power or strength, which commonly lies in the gates of a city, or the arms or weapons that were usually kept over them. By the 'gates of hell' are meant the powers of death and of the devil; for hell in Scripture is sometimes taken for the grave, and sometimes for the place of the damned; the combined forces of both which, shall never prevail so far as to destroy the Church of Christ. The gates of Zion, guarded by

the power and providence of God, will be too strong for the gates of hell, fortified with all the powers of darkness; nor shall any strength or subtilty whatever root out the faith which Christ himself hath planted. Satan, indeed, desired to have the 'sifting' of St. Peter, that he might shake his faith; but Christ 'prayed for him, that his faith failed not:' and if we resist the devil steadfast in the faith, he must and will flee from us. To secure the faith and firmness of the disciples, Christ promised to 'be with them to the end of the world.' Matt. xxviii. 20. And if he be with and for us, who can be against us? Yea, farther to assure us of his presence, he declares that he will never leave or forsake his followers, Heb. xiii. 5; which made St. Peter ask the question, 'Who shall harm you, if ye are followers of that which is good? For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.' 2 Pet. ii. 9.

These are the principal promises recorded in the New Testament for the security of the Church; which we shall do well frequently to remember and ruminate upon.

But here we must note, that these promises are not absolute, but conditional. There are some things to be done by the members of the Church, to entitle them to the blessings promised to it; and they are to keep God's laws, to observe the rules, and to live in obedience to the good orders of the Church; without which, we cannot reasonably expect, nor shall ever obtain the blessing.

The largest promise of this kind that was ever made to any, was to David and his seed; to whom God Almighty promised to establish his throne for ever, that his hand should hold him fast, and his arm should strengthen him; that the enemy should not be able to do him violence, nor the wicked approach to hurt him; for he would smite down his foes before his face, and plague them that hated him. These were all great and desirable favours and blessings. But yet some conditions are added: 'For if thy children break my laws, and walk not in my statutes; if they forsake my ways, and keep not my commandments, I will visit their iniquities with the rod, and their sin with scourges.' And there cannot be a greater scourge to any people, than to set a wicked man to be ruler over them.

In short, some conditions must be performed on our part, to be made partakers of the promised blessings; and we see they are, adhering to the faith, and true obedience. And if we do our part, we may rest assured, that God will not be wanting on his; for he hath engaged his truth and faithfulness to make it good: which is—

The next thing to be spoken to; 'He is faithful that hath promised. God is not a man, that he should lie (said Balaam); nor the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said it, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it

good?' Numb. xxiii. Yes, he will not, yea, he cannot falsify his word, nor suffer his truth to fail. It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one jot or tittle of his word to fail or fall to the ground; Luke xvi. 17; especially having backed it with an oath, for the greater confirmation: 'I have sworn by my holiness (saith God), that I will not fail David;' called therefore 'the sure mercies of David.' And 'God willing (saith the apostle) more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things (viz. his 'word' and his 'oath'), wherein it was impossible for God to lie, they might have the greater assurance and consolation.' Heb. vi. And this the providence of God hath performed to his Church in all ages; for he hath still watched over it for good, defeating the plots and evil designs of its enemies, and delivering it in the greatest extremities; as the histories of all times, and our own experience can abundantly testify. For God 'is faithful that promised,' and 'will not suffer us to be tried above our strength, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.' 1 Cor. x. 13.

It is true, God Almighty, for the punishment of some, and for a trial of the patience and constancy of others, suffers his people sometimes to lie under sore and heavy persecutions. So did the Israelites under the oppression and tyranny of Pharaoh, and so did the primitive Christians under the rage and fury of heathen emperors. Yet still God had a Church among them, which he preserved amidst the flames and fury of the hottest persecutions. Such were the Israelites in Egypt, and the first Christians in the times of heathen and bloody persecutors; who were both rescued from the power and malice of those that would have rooted them out.

Indeed, sometimes the Church may be brought to a low ebb, when the tide of ungodliness flows very high; and in a corrupt and degenerate age there may be but few sound members left. So it happened in the days of the old world, when the Church was circumscribed within the narrow limits of Noah's family, who were all saved in the ark from perishing by water, when the rest of the world were all swept away with a deluge.

In some time after, the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah grew so great, and spread so wide among the inhabitants of those cities, that the Church seemed to be restrained only to Lot's house, where but a few righteous persons were left; who were saved in Zoar from perishing by fire, when the rest of the inhabitants were all consumed in the flames. So that still God had some faithful servants left; of whom the Divine Providence took that care, as not to suffer them to be wholly lost.

In the days of Ahab and Jezebel, such havoc was made of the priests, and the people fell so fast into idolatry, that Elijah thought the servants of God were all either destroyed or

corrupted. But God let him know the contrary, saying, 'Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and whose mouths have not kissed him.' 1 Kings xix 18.

In process of time, when the main body of the Jews were rejected and cut off for their unbelief; and so the Church, which was then confined to that people, in great danger to be lost; we are told that the excision was not total, but that 'a remnant was saved.' Rom. ix. 27. And what was lost by the infidelity of the Jews, was abundantly supplied by the accession and conversion of the Gentiles. After which, the Church, that before was but like a grain of mustard-seed, the least of all seeds, by degrees grew into a large spreading tree, where many might lodge in the branches of it; and God Almighty so pruned and watered this vine, which his own right hand had planted, that it grew and increased exceedingly. Insomuch, that 'all the kingdoms of the earth became the kingdoms of Christ; and the mountain of the house of the Lord was exalted above the tops of the mountains.' The crowns and sceptres of princes veiled to the banner of the cross, and Christianity spread and prevailed over the face of the earth.

Yea, we read that the Church increased and multiplied by those sufferings that were designed to diminish and destroy it; and like the palm-tree rose and flourished the more, by the endeavours that were used to suppress it. It is said of the Israelites in Egypt, that 'the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew.' Exod. i. 12. And the blood of the martyrs hath since proved the seed of the Church; which, wherever it hath been sown, hath ever produced a plentiful harvest.

But was not the destruction of the seven churches of Asia, whom God for their lukewarmness and hypocrisy spewed out of his mouth, and are left as monuments of Divine vengeance ever since, a sad instance of the ruin and failure of the christian Church? Yes, of some particular, but not of the universal Church: for though those seven churches were for their ingratitude and barrenness in good works, justly deprived of the light of the gospel, and remain still overspread with darkness and barbarism; yet was not the light of it put out, but only transferred to another people, among whom it shined the brighter: though the candlestick was removed, yet the light was not wholly extinguished, but what was wanting in one place was made up with advantage in another. So that God hath always had some true and faithful servants, that have stuck to him in the worst of times. And it is not to be doubted, but that even in our corrupt and degenerate age, wherein atheism, schism, and infidelity so unhappily abound, there are many thousand souls, who firmly adhere to the christian Church, and the one faith and communion professed and settled in it, and resolve to continue so to do to their lives' end. And

some such there always will be to the end of the world, whom God hath promised so to preserve, that neither the subtlety nor the cruelty of all their adversaries shall be ever able utterly to destroy or root out.

By which it appears, that 'he is faithful that hath promised,' having ever fulfilled his word, and never suffered his truth to fail. And therefore,—

Thirdly, We may safely rely on him for the continuance of his Church, and the faith professed in it; for he is abundantly able and willing to protect and preserve both.

As for his ability, he that hath all power in heaven and earth, and to whom nothing is impossible, cannot want power to perform his promise, none having any might or wisdom without or against him.

As for his willingness: he that is abundant in goodness and truth, and whose mercies are over all his works, cannot want a will to extend it to his own Church and people, especially having pawned his faithfulness so to do. Upon both which accounts, we may very well repose our full trust and confidence in him, and depend upon the Divine Providence for the stability of his Church, and the success of our faith in him: of which we may be fully assured,—

1st, From the near relation which Christ beareth to his Church, which he sometimes styles, 'his own body;' and for that we may be sure he must have a particular kindness, and will take a more especial care. Again, he calls it sometimes 'his spouse, and his dearly beloved;' which endearing relations have made him so tender of their welfare, that 'he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye.' Zech. ii. 8.

2dly, The price that Christ gave for his Church, which 'he purchased with his' own blood, Acts. xx. 28, will not suffer it to be lost. 'We were not redeemed (saith St. Peter) with such corruptible things as silver, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot.' 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Now he that paid so dear for his Church, will not let it run to ruin or decay; nor shall the faith, upon which it is founded, ever fall to the ground: No, 'the foundation of the Lord standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.' 2 Tim. ii. 19.

3dly, The covenant that God entered into with us, whereby he hath engaged to be our God, and we to be his people, may give us full assurance of his care and protection. Hence Zacharias puts us in mind of God's 'performing the promise made to our forefathers, and remembering his holy covenant.' Luke i. 72. And the blessed Virgin acknowledgeth, that 'he remembering his mercy hath holpen his servant Israel, as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever;' ver. 54, 55. From whence we may still conclude, that he who hath been

ever mindful of his covenant, will never be forgetful of his Church.

To all which if we add the consideration, how much the honour and glory of God is concerned in the preservation of his Church; we may safely depend upon it, that neither the bars of the grave, nor the gates of hell shall ever prevail against it.

Thus we see the firmness and fidelity of God's promises, together with the safety and stability of the Church, and the christian faith, upon which it is founded.

From all which we may, by way of application, infer these few corollaries. As,—

First, We may learn hence the extreme folly and madness of plotting and conspiring against the Church of Christ; for God Almighty having taken it into his care and protection, to attempt against it, is to fight against God, and to be confederate against him; which none ever did and prospered, as we may see in the murmurings of the people against Moses and Aaron. Numb. xvi.

The Church indeed hath ever had many subtle and malicious enemies, that desired and designed its ruin. The Psalmist speaks of some in his time, 'who bore an evil will at Zion;' and of others that said of Jerusalem, 'Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.' Psal. cxxxvii. 7. 'Gebal and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines also with them that dwelt at Tyre, all conspired against it, saying, Come, and let us root them out, that they be no more a people, and that the name of Israel be no more in remembrance.' Psal. lxxxiii. Yea, we read that 'the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed.' Psal. ii. 2, 3. But what was the issue of all this? Why, the Psalmist tells us, 'They did but imagine a vain thing; and formed a mischievous device, which they were not able to perform: for he that sitteth in the heavens laughed them to scorn, and the Most High had them in derision; saying, Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.' Ver. 1. 4, 5, 6, and Psal. xxi. 11.

Neither doth this enmity and opposition against the Church yet cease, some reviling, and others secretly studying to undermine it. And as Herod and Pontius Pilate, though at variance with one another, did yet agree together against our Saviour; so all sects and factions, Presbyterians, Quakers and Anabaptists, though differing among themselves, are yet confederate together against the Church as the common enemy; the Atheist also is joined with them, the Deist with the sons of Belial and children of disobedience, all conspire together to compass its destruction.

But thanks be to God, whose watchful providence is ever ready to protect and defend it, to blast all the designs laid against it, and to deliver it from the malice and machinations of all its adversaries. And may it still continue to do so to the world's end!

Secondly, This discourse may serve to comfort all the dejected or distressed members of the Church, who wish well to Zion, and lament the decays and ruins of Jerusalem; for though the walls may be shaken, yet the foundation of it standeth sure. The Lord knoweth and will preserve those that are his.

Indeed God may and sometimes doth use the wicked as his rod, to correct the faults and miscarriages of his own children; but he will not take away his loving-kindness from them, nor suffer his truth to fail. He hath undertaken their defence, and none shall be able to pluck them out of his hands; for if the powers of hell cannot prevail, we need not fear what earthly powers can do against them: which is enough to bear us up with comfort under all the crosses and calamities of this life; for 'though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet God hath promised to deliver them out of all.' And 'faithful is he that promised.'

Lastly, From what hath been said, we may learn to bless God for taking so great care of his Church: and to rely upon the security and protection of his Almighty and out-stretched arm, never betaking ourselves to any sinister or indirect courses for our own safety, but committing ourselves and our cause to him in well-doing, who will surely stand by and deliver us in all the needful times of trouble.

Let us then firmly adhere to the catholic Church, and never warp or waver from the catholic faith established and professed in it.

More particularly; Let us stick close to that sound part of it that is established among us. A Church truly ancient and apostolical, whose doctrine, discipline and devotion are all framed by the first pure and primitive pattern; and since refined from the dregs of superstition, and the dross of enthusiasm. By living in the communion of it here on earth, we shall be fitted to live in the communion of saints for ever in heaven. Let us therefore be true to it without doubting and hypocrisy, and persevere in it to the end without defection or apostasy; so shall it be safe from the gates of hell, and strong as the gates of heaven; through which an entrance shall be administered abundantly into the kingdom of God, to all that adhere to and put their trust in him. In a word, 'My brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:' which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXC.

THE OFFICE OF BAPTISM.

JOHN iii. 5.—*Jesus answered and said, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

THE office of baptism, which I am now entering upon, begins with this question to the persons that bring the child to baptism, 'Hath this child been already baptized, or no?' which question is not so vain and needless as some have weakly imagined and objected: for since baptism, which is the receiving persons into the Church, is an office to be done once for all, and may not be reiterated; it is requisite, that he who is to officiate in it should know whether it hath been performed already, lest he should do that again which ought not to be repeated. St. Paul tells us, that as 'there is but one Lord, and one faith; so there is but one baptism,' Ephes. iv. 5, and therefore but once to be administered. So that place in the Hebrews, of persons being 'once enlightened,' is generally expounded of their being once baptized. From whence the Christian church never allowed the repeating of baptism; and the Fathers generally condemned all rebaptizing, except in the case of those who were baptized by heretics, that omitted the form of administration appointed by our Saviour, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whose baptisms they accounted mere nullities, or no baptisms.

Besides, since baptism may be sometimes administered in private houses, in cases of necessity; and this duty may be performed elsewhere by persons unknown to the minister, it is fit he should be certified beforehand whether it hath been already done, which are good reasons for asking of this question; to which if they answer No, then he is to proceed to the following exhortation, in which, after the courteous salutation of 'dearly beloved,' to invite all that are present to join in their good wishes and prayers for the person to be baptized, we may observe,

First, The sinfulness and misery of that natural state, in which we all come into the world, in those words, 'forasmuch as all men are conceived, and born in sin.'

Secondly, The necessity of baptism, to wash off this natural pollution, and to put us into a better condition; for 'that our Saviour Christ saith, none can enter into the kingdom of God except he be regenerate, and born anew of water and the Holy Ghost.'

Thirdly, The minister's early suit to the congregation, in the behalf of the persons to be baptized: 'I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to grant to this child, what by nature it cannot have.'

Fourthly, The great benefits and privileges of baptism; three whereof are here mentioned, to wit,

1st, 'To be baptized with water and the Holy Ghost.'
2dly, 'To be received into Christ's holy church.'
3dly, 'To be made lively members of the same.'

These are the particulars now to be treated of, from the introduction to baptism. And I begin,—

First, With the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, before we receive our baptism, couched in those words, 'Forasmuch as all men are conceived, and born in sin.' This relates to that original corruption and depravedness of nature, that was contracted by the sin of our first parents, and derived down to their posterity, by descending from their stock, whereby they become prone to all manner of evil, and averse to all that is good: this we all find and feel by sad experience, and hath been acknowledged and lamented by all good men in all ages, that the leprosy of sin had infected and overspread the whole man; no faculty of the soul, or member of the body, being free from the contagion, but 'even the mind and conscience were defiled.' 'The imagination of man's heart (saith God) is evil from his youth; yea evil, only evil, and that continually.' Gen. viii. 21. 'Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me,' said holy David. Psalm li. 5. Holy Job asks the question, 'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?' and answers, 'Not one.' Job xiv. 4. And how can we be pure and clean, that proceed from a fountain of impurity, or sink of corruption? The prophet Isaiah declares of man in his natural state, that 'his whole head is sick, and his whole heart faint; from the sole of his feet to the crown of his head, there is no soundness in him; nothing but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores.' Isa. i. 5, 6. And Ezekiel describes him, to be one that is 'polluted in his own blood;' and is only cleansed 'by the washing of water.' Ezek. xvi. 6, 9. In the New Testament, St. Paul, speaking in the person of an unregenerate man, saith, 'I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not; for the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do,' Rom. vii. 18, 19: *video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.* Which things he ascribes to the corruption of our nature, or to 'the sin that dwelleth in us,' and from thence cries out, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?' This is the sinful and miserable condition of all men by nature, who are all conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity. Now the only remedy to help us out in this forlorn case, is to be washed and cleansed in the waters of baptism: and this leads,—

Secondly, To the next thing to be considered, viz. the necessity of baptism, to purify us from this natural pollution, and recover us to a better state, from those words of our Saviour, 'Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Where to be 'born again'

supposeth a former birth, and that is our first entrance into the world by our natural birth; wherein we are born spiritually 'dead in trespasses and sins,' by which we are the 'children of wrath,' and the 'heirs of damnation.' But our new birth is our entrance into the Church, by which we are recovered from this spiritual death to a new life, and thereby made the 'children of God,' and 'heirs of his heavenly kingdom.'

To be 'born again of water,' is meant of the waters of baptism, there being no other new birth of which we are capable by that element. The admission of proselytes among the Jews, was wont to be by the washing of water; and he that was thus admitted was said to be *recens natus*, new-born. Accordingly, the washing away the guilt of sin, by the waters of baptism, is, in the Scriptures of the New Testament, often styled by the name of 'regeneration,' or a 'new birth;' the font is called the 'laver of regeneration,' Tit. iii. 5. And, by the resurrection of Christ, we are said to 'be begotten again unto a lively hope,' 1 Pet. i. 3: both which are represented in baptism, wherein as the plunging of the body under water, used in the beginning of Christianity, signified the being dead and buried with Christ; so the rising out of it betokened the reviving again, and 'rising to a newness of life,' as we read Rom. vi. 3—5. So that to be born again of water, is all one with being baptized.

To be born again of 'water and the Spirit,' is to receive the Holy Ghost, which came down at our Saviour's baptism 'in the shape of a dove, and lighted upon him,' Matt. iii. 16. In like manner, the Spirit moves still on the waters of baptism, and makes them healing and salutary to our souls. To baptize with water only, was John's baptism; but to baptize with the Holy Ghost added to it, is the baptism of our Saviour, who is alone able to bestow it: so St. John declares, 'I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He that cometh after me is greater than I, He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost,' Matt. iii. 11; meaning, that Christ alone can confer his Holy Spirit in baptism, inspiring us with a new principle of life, to remove the guilt, and subdue the power of sin in us; and endowing us with grace and spiritual strength, to walk before him in newness of life. This is here made absolutely necessary to salvation, our Saviour Christ expressly saying, 'that none can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be regenerate, and born anew of water, and the Holy Ghost:' for we must be purged from the guilt and pollution of sin, before we can be qualified for the undefiled regions above; and our natures must be renewed and refined, by the graces of God's Holy Spirit, before they can be fit to be received into those heavenly mansions of purity, where no defilement enters. This God hath required as a necessary means leading thereunto, for 'without holiness no man can, or shall see the Lord.' And Mark xvi. 16, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not

shall be damned.' Faith must be attended with baptism, to make it available to salvation; and the neglect or contempt of it, where it may be had, incurs the peril of damnation. But of the necessity of baptism, in order to salvation, see more in the 3d Part of the Catechism, Discourse the 2d, where this matter is more largely handled.

From the corruption and depravedness of nature, which we bring into the world with us, and the necessity of baptism to purge it away, I proceed,—

Thirdly, To the minister's earnest suit to the congregation, in the behalf of the persons to be baptized, in these words: 'I beseech you to call upon God the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that of his bounteous mercy he would grant to this child that thing, which by nature it cannot have.' All children come into the world defiled, both in body and soul, receiving impurity from that fountain of uncleanness, from whence they derive their being: but God (as one hath well observed) hath provided a remedy as large as the evil; to wit, water to cleanse the outward, and the Spirit to purify the inward man; and hath ordained the sacrament of baptism, for the sanctifying of both. To him, therefore, must we have recourse for grace, to render it effectual to that end; devoutly beseeching all those that are present, 'to call upon God the Father,' who giveth this grace, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord;' who hath purchased and promised it to all his followers, and appointed this sacrament on purpose to convey it to them. In which request we should be very instant in the behalf of infants, because though they need the grace of baptism, yet they cannot ask it for themselves; and likewise, because in asking it for them, we ask 'that which by nature they cannot have:' nature itself is too corrupt, either to give or deserve it; that affords nothing but strong inclinations to evil, and great incentives to misery; but hath nothing to heal, or remove either: and therefore we beg of God 'of his bounteous mercy' to give unto them, what they can neither have, nor merit for themselves, viz. to 'be baptized with water, and the Holy Ghost; and to be received into Christ's holy Church, and made lively members of the same;' which will lead me to the three great benefits and privileges of baptism.

The first whereof is, to 'be baptized with water, and the Holy Ghost.' Water (as one hath well observed) hath a known natural property of cleansing, and is therefore made the symbol of purification among all nations: and in that signification hath been ever used in the rites of all religions. The frequent washings of the Jews are well known in all their sacrifices, for the expiation of sin; and the Gentiles likewise had their washings before their sacrifices, as a means of purification. Hence our Saviour adopted it into the rites of his religion, and commanded his disciples to be baptized with water for the remission of sins, but water alone was not sufficient to that purpose; for that

cannot reach the soul, nor wash away the original corruption and defilement of nature, and therefore to water he added the baptizing with the Holy Ghost; the one to cleanse the body, the other to purify the soul, and both to wash off all impurity.

This is one great benefit or blessing, that we pray for in the behalf of baptized infants, that they may be born again of water and the Spirit, that old things may pass away, and all things become new, and Christ may be formed in them by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. For as, in the old creation, the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters, and thereby quickened the rude unformed chaos into the beautiful frame of the world; even so in the new creation, or regeneration of a Christian, the same Spirit moves upon the waters of baptism, and thereby gives a new and spiritual life, bringing light out of darkness, and order out of confusion. And as the angel stirred the waters of Bethesda, before they became healing and medicinal to the body, so the Spirit's moving and acting upon the waters of baptism, makes them salutary and healthful to the soul. This is expressed by the apostle, by the 'washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.' Tit. iii. 5.

Secondly, Another benefit of baptism here prayed for, in the behalf of the baptized party, is reception into the Church, 'that he may be received into Christ's holy Church.' Before we are baptized we are out of the Church, 'without God, and without Christ, and so without hope in the world, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise,' as the apostle describes our natural state. Now by baptism we are translated from this forlorn condition, and received into Christ's Church, by which we are adopted into his family, and listed in the number of his servants and followers. 'As many as are baptized in Christ (saith the apostle) have put on Christ,' that is, they are admitted into the Christian Church, and have put on that relation to Christ, that members have to the body; hence baptism is called the door of entrance into the Church, and the gate that leads us into Christ's fold. For 'by one spirit (saith the apostle) we are baptized into one body, and are made to drink of the same Spirit.' 1 Cor. xii. 14. By which we enjoy the privileges of hearing God's word, and partaking of his holy sacraments; together with spiritual aid and strength enough to render them effectual, which is here prayed for.

Lastly, We are by baptism not only received into Christ's holy Church, 'but made lively members of the same;' for being engrafted into Christ's body, we derive grace from him, to quicken us into a new life of holiness and virtue. The members, you know, in the natural body live by the influences of the head, and the branches live in the vine by the sap communicated from the root.

In like manner, the members of Christ's mystical body are animated by his Holy Spirit, and live a life of grace here, in and

by the spiritual strength they receive from him as the Head, which will ere long bring them to a life of glory. These are things which this exhortation to baptism puts us upon asking for the baptized infant; the application whereof will chiefly lie in those two things.

First, To caution all parents against a wilful neglect of this holy ordinance, by which they debar their children of all those invaluable benefits of baptism.

Secondly, To take heed, not only of denying, but delaying of 'baptism,' for that may expose to great hazards, and occasion the total neglect of the duty. Some putting it off from day to day, have at last lost all opportunity of doing it at all, to the great peril of their own, and their children's souls.

Delays, we say, are dangerous, but in nothing more than in the weighty matters of salvation. But these things being more largely insisted on in the forementioned discourse, I shall, to avoid repetition, refer the reader to it.

DISCOURSE CCXCI.

THE TYPES AND FIGURES OF BAPTISM.

1 PETER iii. 20, 21. — *Which were sometime disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water; the like figure whereunto even baptism doth now also save us, not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God by the resurrection of Christ.*

AFTER the general exhortation to baptism, containing the institution, the necessity, and benefits of that ordinance, which were treated of in the last; there follow two excellent collects or prayers for the person to be baptized, which come next to be handled; and I begin with the—

First, In which we may observe first, the preface containing the two types or figures of baptism, in the Old Testament, viz. 'Noah and his family being saved in the ark from perishing by water; and the children of Israel being safely led through the Red Sea, figuring thereby this holy baptism: together with the antetype of it in the New Testament, viz. Christ's being baptized in the river Jordan, and thereby sanctifying water to the mystical washing away of sin.

Secondly, Petitions for the persons to be baptized, viz. 'We beseech thee mercifully to look upon this child, and to wash and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost.'

Thirdly, The ends for which we make and offer up these requests; viz. 'That he being delivered from God's wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's Church, and being steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, may so pass

the waves of this troublesome world, that finally he may come to the land of everlasting life,' &c. These are the particulars of this collect, of each of which, something must be spoken.

And First, of the preface, in which, after the usual titles of 'Almighty and everlasting God,' we have an account of the two types or figures of baptism in the Old Testament. The first whereof, 'is Noah and his family being saved in the ark from perishing by water;' which St. Peter here, in the words of our text, makes a type of our salvation by 'baptism,' telling us, that the old world was 'sometime disobedient,' and abused 'the long-suffering of God in waiting for their repentance, while the ark was preparing; but finding them incorrigible, he swept them away with a deluge, 'wherein few, that is eight souls,' that were righteous, 'were saved by water,' which bore up the ark for their preservation.

To make this type or resemblance the more agreeable, the ancient Fathers style the flood the 'baptism' of the world, the wickedness whereof was purged away by water, and all that was corrupt was buried in it; till at last, in token that the evil of it was done away, a dove, the emblem of God's Holy Spirit, with an olive-branch of peace in its mouth, rested upon the renewed face of the earth, to signify, that God was reconciled and his indignation was overpast. In conformity whereunto, the old man, with all that was corrupt, is buried in baptism, being washed away in that 'laver of regeneration,' and the new man restored in us by the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost:' as we read, Tit. iii. 5. 'The like figure whereunto (saith St. Peter in the text), is baptism, which now saveth us,' not so much by 'putting away the filth of the flesh,' as by the 'answer and purity of a good conscience,' which is the first type here referred to.

The Second is, God's 'giving the Israelites, his own people, a safe passage through the Red Sea;' to this St. Paul alludes in 1 Cor. x. 2; 'And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea;' meaning, that Moses's leading them by a cloud, and opening for them a passage through the Red Sea, was a sort of baptism, to confirm them in the belief of Moses's doctrine, and that he was a leader sent from God: now the resemblance here lies in this, that as the Israelites of old safely passed the waters of the Red Sea, wherein Pharaoh and his host, their bitter enemies, were drowned and lost; so Christians now pass from a spiritual death to a new life, by the waters of baptism, wherein the power of sin and Satan, their ghostly enemies, is sunk and broken.

These are the two types or figures of the Old Testament, to foreshow the nature, and typify the efficacy of 'baptism;' the fulfilling whereof in the New began with John's baptism, who baptized only with water unto repentance, which baptism our Saviour honoured by receiving it himself at John's hand, adding to it the baptism of the Holy Ghost, to give it the greater force

and credit: St. John indeed declined at first, as thinking it too great an honour for him to baptize his Saviour, saying, 'I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?' But Jesus not disliking his modesty, said unto him, 'Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, then he suffered him,' and by his order and permission baptized him; the heavens signally opening at his baptism, 'and the Spirit of God descending upon him like a dove, and lighting upon him, and lo a voice from heaven was heard, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' Matt. iii. lat. end.

He fulfilled the righteousness of the law by his being circumcised, whereby he became a 'debtor to keep the whole law,' which he accordingly fulfilled to a tittle.

He fulfilled the righteousness of the gospel by his being baptized, which he after instituted as a sacrament of initiation into his Church for the remission of sins, giving a commission to his apostles, and all that succeed them in the pastoral office, 'to baptize all nations, teaching them to observe all that he had commanded.' Matt. xxviii. Thus 'God, by the baptism of his well-beloved Son in the river Jordan, hath sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin.' Christ was baptized (saith St. Ambrose), not to cleanse himself, of which he had no need, but to cleanse the water, that being washed by the flesh of Christ, who knew no sin, it might the better wash our flesh from all pollution; nor may we imagine (as some have vainly affirmed) that Christ consecrated no other waters to those purposes but those of Jordan, in which he himself condescended to be baptized; and therefore some of old refused to be baptized in any other water but that of Jordan, as thinking Christ's blessing and sanctifying virtue to be derived only to that. But this would make Christ's mercy in this matter too straight and narrow, which he confined not to one place or river, but communicated to all water, that should be after used to that purpose; only care should be taken, that since the design of it is purifying and cleansing, we should make choice of such as is most pure and clean for that purpose.

And now having set forth the types and figures representing 'baptism' under the legal dispensation, together with our Saviour's honouring and instituting of it under the gospel:

The Church here proceeds, in the next place, to put up petitions suitable thereunto, in the behalf of the infant to be baptized, to wit, 'We beseech thee of thine infinite mercies mercifully to look upon this child, and to wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost.' Where we,—

First, Beg of God, the Father of mercies, to cast a gracious and favourable eye upon the present infant, to pity the sad estate of sin and misery, in which he was conceived and born into the world, and of his great goodness to deliver him from it; the original corruption of his nature by the first sin, may justly pro-

voke God to loath and to leave him, to keep them at a distance from him: but God being infinite in mercy, we beseech him to extend it to such poor, helpless infants, to take them into the arms of his mercy, and adopt them as children into his own family.

Secondly, We pray God to 'wash them' from all the corruption and defilement of their natures, and to give them that purity of mind and heart, of which the outward washing is a sign or symbol; this we find David often calling upon God for, saying, 'Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin, for I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me; purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Psal. li. 2, 3, &c. This is what we ask here for tender infants, that their natural pollution may be washed away in the font or laver of regeneration.

Thirdly, We pray God to 'sanctify them with the Holy Ghost,' that is, to endue them with the graces of his Holy Spirit, and especially those mentioned by the apostle, of 'faith, hope, and charity,' the three cardinal virtues of Christianity, and the main supports of the new nature given by God in 'baptism.' And that these graces may abide and grow in them, we pray,—

First, That they may be 'steadfast in faith,' meaning the faith or articles of the Creed, into the belief of which they are baptized: it is the duty of all baptized Christians firmly to adhere to the faith they professed or promised at their entrance into Christianity, and to persevere in it to the end, not to corrupt it by errors and heresies, nor to depart from it by infidelity, nor to desert it by apostasy, being neither allured from it by the smiles, nor affrighted from it by the frowns of the world; but 'holding fast the profession of faith without wavering,' and continuing steadfast and unmovable in it to the last. And because we cannot do this by our own strength, we pray God 'to keep us by his grace through faith unto salvation,' and especially to fortify infants betimes by his Holy Spirit, that they may be able to stand their ground ever after, and resist all the force and charms of temptation.

Secondly, We desire they may be made 'joyful through hope,' and filled with comfortable expectations of that immortality, unto which they are entitled by their 'baptism;' such an expectation will beget joy and peace in believing. This 'hope (saith the apostle) maketh not ashamed,' but fills the heart with 'joy unspeakable and full of glory.' By this they will be able to bear up under the difficulties of this mortal state, 'and run with cheerfulness the race that is set before them;' this hope of a future happiness is the 'anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast,' to keep it from fluctuating in doubts, and to enter it within the vail, where it can see through the miseries of this life, to the glories of the next; the comfortable expectation whereof is enough to make all that have it 'joyful through hope.'

3dly, We desire, that these baptized infants may be 'rooted in charity;' that is, in the love of God and our neighbour, which, if well rooted in the heart, will shoot forth in all the branches of holiness and virtue: it will create zeal and sincerity in our duty towards God, and justice and honesty in all our dealings with men; 'and if these things be in them and abound, they will make that they shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2 Pet. i. 8. These are some of the principal petitions, that we are here directed to put up for all persons to be baptized. But what are the ends of asking these things for them? Why, that the following words of the collect will inform us; as,—

First, That they may be 'delivered from God's wrath:' the first transgression made all men guilty before God, and rendered them obnoxious to the just sentence and severity of his wrath, by which means all the sons of Adam are born children of wrath, by being the children of disobedience: but now, by this sacrament of the new birth, they become regenerate, and are put into a new state of things, so that they change all their relations; for whereas before they were only the children of Adam, they are now taken for children of God, and such as for whom he takes a more peculiar and fatherly care. So St. Paul minded the Corinthians, 1st Epistle, chap. vi. 11; where, after he had mentioned some of the worst of sinners, that were to be excluded from the kingdom of heaven; 'and such (saith he) were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God;' which words represent the happy change that was made in them by the waters of baptism, wherein he gave them a new heart, and put a new spirit within them, whereby they stood upon other terms with God, and from heirs of death and hell were translated into a new state of life and salvation: from whence I proceed to the

Second end of baptism here mentioned, viz. that being delivered from God's wrath, 'they may be received into the ark of Christ's church;' which words allude to the receiving of Noah and his family into the ark, prepared for that purpose, and thereby saving them from perishing in the waters that drowned the rest of mankind. Where the ark is a figure or emblem of Christ's Church, in which children being received by baptism, are delivered from God's wrath, and saved from the general shipwreck and destruction of the world. Out of the Church there is ordinarily no salvation; and as they that were out of the ark were overwhelmed in the waters, so they that are out of the Church sink in the common fall and ruin of mankind; so that it is an inestimable privilege we have by baptism, to be received into Christ's family, and to be numbered among his people, of whom he hath a most tender regard. By this seal of the Spirit, we are marked up for his flock, whereby he owns us

for his, and knows us from all others, endowing us with peculiar favours here, and hereafter with endless glory; and this will lead me to the last end of baptism, that being made thereby 'steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in charity, we may so pass the waves of this troublesome world, that we may finally come to the land of everlasting life.' The ark of Christ's Church is liable to be tossed here by the winds and waves of a troublesome world; storms of persecution may, and sometimes do arise, that are apt to shake the faith, weaken the hope, and cool the charity even of the best Christians. But Christ hath prayed for, and promised to assist those within his Church, that adhere to, and put their affiance in him; he will carry them safe through all the storms and tempests of this life, and land them in a haven of everlasting rest and tranquillity, there to reign with him world without end.

This is the sense of this collect, for the baptizing of infants, which contains the nature, end, and use of this holy sacrament; wherein we are purged from the pollution of original sin, 'by the washing of water, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' and by faith and repentance are secured of a pardon for all actual transgressions. Wherefore let us from hence learn, to set a high price and value upon this ordinance of baptism, and by no means neglect it, either for ourselves or others. To obtain the benefit of it, let us persevere in the faith professed in it, without 'departing from it by an evil heart of unbelief;' let us implore the motion or stirring of God's Holy Spirit upon these waters, to make them healing and effectual to our salvation. In a word, 'let us be faithful unto death, and we shall surely receive a crown of life;' which God grant for the merits of Jesus Christ, &c. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCXCII.

THE SECOND COLLECT OF PRAYER IN BAPTISM.

MATTHEW vii. 7.—*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

THE second collect or prayer for the child to be baptized being of the same nature, and much to the same effect with the former, will need no large explication; it contains a farther encouragement to the duty, from the certain success that will attend it. And in it we may observe, first, the attributes and properties of God, fitted to usher in the following requests, as 'Almighty and Immortal God;' the one signifying the immensity of his power, and the other the eternity of his duration; both which are taken from that of the apostle, 1 Tim. vi. 16, 'Who only hath immortality, dwelling in that light, unto which no mortal eye can approach, to whom belongs honour and power everlasting;' from whom we may safely expect all that he wills us to ask. These

are the attributes or titles here given to him, of which enough hath been spoken elsewhere. Then for the properties of his nature and goodness: he is here styled,—

First, 'The aid of all that need, and the helper of all that fly to him for succour.' Which words are taken from several places in the book of Psalms, where he is sometimes called 'the Helper of the friendless,' Psalm x. 16; sometimes 'a present help in time of need,' and the like: David often styles him 'his Helper and Defender,' and declares him ever ready to hear and help the poor destitute. By these characters of power and mercy, he is here invoked in the behalf of young tender infants, who being poor helpless creatures, unable to succour themselves, and yet standing in continual need of succour, are here recommended to the mercy and goodness of their Maker. He supplies their bodily wants by the care and natural affection of earthly parents, whose ears are open to their cries, and their hands ever ready for their support and relief. He supplies their spiritual wants by the aids and assistances of his Holy Spirit, which is never wanting to help the infirmities of such as cannot help themselves. And 'if earthly parents, (saith our Saviour,) being evil and weak, know how to give good gifts to their children; how much more shall your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it?' Luke xi. 13. Again,—

Secondly, To beget the greater confidence in him, he is here styled 'the life of them that believe:' hence we are said to 'live in him by faith,' and derive grace from him, as the branches do sap from the vine. 'Whosoever believeth in me, (saith Christ,) though he were dead, yet shall he live:' and elsewhere, 'Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life;' implying, that by coming to him, we may receive life and salvation from him. And therefore he is fitly solicited in favour of young helpless children, who are born 'dead in trespasses and sin,' to have a new spiritual life restored to them: and it is no small happiness, that we have such a powerful and merciful God to apply to in the behalf of such poor creatures, as can neither know nor remove their own misery; and since they cannot speak for themselves, the charity of the Church directs us to become humble supplicants for them at the throne of grace. To encourage us whereunto, He is—

Thirdly, Styled 'the resurrection of the dead;' so he calls himself, John xi. 25, saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' He is the resurrection to a spiritual life of grace here, and to an eternal life of glory hereafter. So that 'whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall not die eternally, but have everlasting life;' hence is that rousing exhortation of the apostle, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life.' Ephes. v. 14. Sin is not only a sleep, out of which we are to awake, but a death out of which we are to arise; and nothing but the quickening grace and Spirit of God is able to do both, which should lead us all to him in the behalf of ourselves and

others: so the Church here, from these powerful motives, wills us to do for the child to be baptized, saying, in the

Next words, 'We call upon thee for this infant;' that is, we present thee with an object fit for thy mercy to work upon, and address for one who cannot address for himself; because thy mercy is over all thy works, and thou desirest not the death of any sinner, we call upon thee for a blessing upon a child of thine, who extremely needs what he cannot ask, for whom therefore we become humble suitors.

And this leads me, 2dly, To the petitions here offered up for the present infant, and they are these two:—

First, 'That he coming to thy holy baptism, may receive the remission of sins by spiritual regeneration.'

Secondly, 'That he may be received for thine own child by adoption;' both which are backed with our Saviour's promise in the text, to grant these things we pray for, saying, 'Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you;' of which briefly.

And, First, We beg of God, that this infant coming to his holy baptism, may receive remission of sins by spiritual regeneration; this is the ordinary way and means appointed by God to that end. St. John is said to preach the baptism of repentance 'for the remission of sins.' Mark i. 4. St. Peter called upon the Jews 'to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the presence of the Lord.' Acts iii. 19. And Ananias, upon St. Paul's conversion, said unto him, 'and now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Acts xxii. 16. By this, God receives us into a state of pardon and forgiveness, assuring us, that Adam's sin shall not undo us; and that no sin of our own, if repented of, shall exclude us out of his favour; but shall be all washed away by the waters of baptism, and the tears of a hearty repentance; God having entered into a new covenant with us, wherein he promises to be our God, and we to be his people, thereby crossing our iniquities out of the book of his remembrance, which, like words written on water, vanish away, and can no where be found.

And all this is here said to be done 'by a spiritual regeneration,' wherein we are said to be born again by the Holy Ghost, which is poured upon us with the water of baptism; of this we read many promises and predictions in the Old Testament. God, by the prophet Esaias, declared, saying, 'I will pour water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring.' Isa. xliv. 3; and Zech. xii. 10, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication;' and elsewhere, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.' All which prophecies were fulfilled in the plentiful

effusion of the Holy Ghost on the apostles and others; and in the liberal communication of the Spirit in baptism, for the pardon of sin, and the purifying of our souls, represented to us by the element of water; for as that cleanses and washes away all the filth of the body, so the Spirit of God is the sanctifier of his people, to purge and cleanse their hearts from all impurities. This is what our Church here teaches us to pray in the behalf of baptized infants.

Secondly, Another petition for them is, that God would receive them for his own children by adoption; this is a great privilege annexed to the sacrament of baptism, wherein we are said to be 'predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.' Ephes. i. 5. 'God hath sent forth his Spirit (saith the same apostle) crying Abba, Father,' for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye 'have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby ye cry Abba, Father.' Gal. iv. 6, and Rom. viii. 15.

Now adoption (you know) is the taking or engrafting a stranger into another's stock or family, and allowing him all the favours and privileges of a natural-born child. This is frequently done by men in case of defect of issue; but God vouchsafes to admit us into his family, and to call us to the adoption of sons, not to supply the want, but to increase the number of his children. Hence God enlarged his Church, which was once confined to the Jews only, 'to whom alone belonged the adoption, the giving of the law and the promises,' by adding to them and adopting the Gentiles, who were before 'aliens and strangers to the covenant of promise.' So that now by baptism, we become 'fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God,' Eph. i. 5, 6, being washed from the guilt and filth of sin, and quickened into a life of grace, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and thereby entitled to the kingdom of glory.

These are the petitions we here put up for all that are to be baptized, which our Church here urges and enforces with a promise made by our Saviour to grant them, in these words, 'Receive them, O Lord, as thou hast promised by thy well-beloved Son,' saying, 'Ask, and ye shall have, seek, and ye shall find, knock, and it shall be opened unto you;' where the duty of prayer, and the success of it, is variously expressed, and set forth by different metaphors.

As First, it is expressed by 'asking;' in which we are represented as humble petitioners at the throne of grace, begging the Father of mercies, and fountain of all goodness, to take these tender infants into his grace and favour, and to make them his own children by adoption; which we have abundant encouragement to ask, from a promise of receiving, 'Ask, and ye shall have.'

Secondly, Prayer is here expressed by 'seeking,' and so it is in many places of Scripture styled a 'seeking after God,' which

supposes God's withdrawing or hiding himself from us, that we have lost and forfeited his favour, and are ourselves lost and undone for lack of him; and therefore are put upon the 'seeking' of him, or 'searching' after him, being encouraged by a promise or assurance of 'finding' him, 'seek, and ye shall find.' He that is secured of finding a treasure, will spare no pains in seeking it; how much then should the security of God's word quicken our search after him, when he hath told us, that 'he will be found of them that seek him?'

Thirdly, Prayer is expressed here by 'knocking' at the gates of heaven; by this we are considered as so many beggars, standing at the doors of mercy, and waiting for some boon or blessing, which we want and desire. And this we are here bid to expect by a promise of an answer and admission, saying, 'knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

Now this promise is by the Church applied here to the present occasion, and turned into a prayer in the behalf of the baptized infant, saying, in the following words: 'So now give unto us that ask, let us that seek, find, open the gate unto us that knock.' Faith teaches us to apply the promises to our present necessities; for the relief of which they were mainly given and intended. And as no medicine, how sovereign soever, can be of any use, unless it be duly applied to the diseased part; so neither can the rich and precious promises of the gospel be of any avail to us, except they are suited and brought home to the present needs and exigencies of the soul. Accordingly, therefore, the Church here applies the general promises to the particular case of infants, beseeching God to do that for them, which he hath declared himself ready to do for all that need and sue for it; parents can only ask, it is God that must give the blessing: the Church can only seek, and bring the infant to heaven's gate; it is God alone that can open and let him in, and send him away washed and sanctified. And therefore,—

We pray, in the close, 'that this infant may enjoy the everlasting benediction of his heavenly washing, and come to the eternal kingdom, which he hath promised by Christ our Lord:' the outward washing of the body is only an external privilege that admits him into the visible Church; it is the inward washing of the soul that is the heavenly blessing, that makes him a member of the invisible Church, and entitles to the kingdom of heaven; its natural life is miserable and mortal, but its spiritual life is eternal, and crowned with glory and immortality, through the alone merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.

This is the sense of this collect, from whence we may learn, to thank God for giving us such gracious promises, and to depend upon his truth and faithfulness for the performing of them; as also to do our part, by adding our best endeavours towards the obtaining of them, of which very briefly,—

And First, from this discourse, we may learn to bless God for

the many and gracious promises made for the good and benefit of poor helpless infants, who without his favour and mercy must perish everlastingly; whereas he hath taken pity on the miseries and infirmities of their natural state, removed their guilt, and received them into the household of his Church; these are great and invaluable blessings, which we owe entirely to the mercy and goodness of God. To this purpose he hath given us many rich and precious promises, which proceed only from his unmerited grace and goodness; and for which we are to render him our continual and unfeigned thanks and praise, saying, with our blessed Saviour, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes, even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight.' Matt. xi. 25, 26. By which he hath made the mouths of babes and sucklings to praise him.

Secondly, We may learn hence to depend upon the truth and faithfulness of God, for the fulfilling of his promises, 'for heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than one tittle of his word shall fall to the ground,' or remain unfulfilled. 'Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' Yes; we may safely rely upon what he hath promised, to give or do for us or our children, nor may we entertain any manner of fears or doubts concerning it; for he wants neither power or will, to do according to what is gone out of his mouth.

Only, *Lastly*, Let us be mindful of doing our part, and adding our best endeavours towards the obtaining of it; we see we are bid to 'ask,' before we can receive, to 'seek,' before we shall find, and to 'knock,' before it will be opened to us. We may not then neglect our prayers for these things, nor hope that the blessings of heaven will drop into our mouths, without opening them; no, he will be sought unto, in the ways of his own appointment, and be searched after, before he will be found. Let us then ask God's blessing for ourselves, and children; let us seek earnestly his favour for both, and lie at the gates of mercy, knocking for entrance, and then by adding the other instruments of religion and a holy life, we shall do as God requires, and be surely blessed in our deed, which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCXCIII.

THE GOSPEL IN BAPTISM.

MARK x. 13.—*They brought young children unto Christ, that he should touch them; and the disciples rebuked them that brought them; but when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.*

Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein, and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.

AFTER the two collects or prayers for the infant to be baptized, there follows a gospel, written by St. Mark, in the words read, setting forth our Saviour's kindness and tender regard to young children; together with an exhortation to the disciples, and a thanksgiving thereupon: all which depending upon each other, and containing matter of great benefit and comfort, both to parents and children, must be particularly explained and unfolded to you.

It begins thus: 'They brought young children unto Christ, that he should touch them;' we read of an ancient custom among the Jews and other nations, to bring their children to the priests, and other persons of great sanctity, to obtain their blessing; thinking it a matter of great use and advantage to them, and saying, as Balak did to Balaam, 'I wot that they, whom thou blessest, are blessed.' The Jews brought their children to the priest to circumcise them, and to receive them into the covenant made with Abraham; and generally the priest's blessing was highly esteemed, and much sought after. We read, that when St. Hilarion passed through Syria, men, women, and children flocked unto him; and kneeling down, cried unto him, saying, Barak, that is, bless us; which is done in some places to this day. Accordingly, we read, that when our Saviour passed in several countries, the people from all parts came unto him, and cried, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us,' some craving his blessing in all places where he came.

Here they brought young children unto him, because they could not come of themselves, to the end, 'that he might touch them;' where by 'touching them,' is meant his blessing and conveying grace to them, which he was wont to do, by laying on of hands and touching them; this was an ancient ceremony, used for that purpose. 'Jacob stretched out his hands, and blessed his sons.' Gen. xlviii. 14, 15. Which was after practised by the Jews, in their solemn benedictions; our Saviour used it in blessing the little children, Matt. xix. 13, as he did in healing the sick, which he often did by a 'touch of his hand.' Matt. viii. 15. As also in raising the dead, which he sometimes did by 'touching the bier.' Luke vii. 14, 15. And the apostles used the same rite for communicating the Spirit in confirmation, Heb. vi. 2. Some indeed would understand Christ's touching the little children here, of his baptizing of them; but St. John expressly tells us, that 'Christ himself baptized not, but' left that to 'his disciples.' John iv. 2. And therefore it must be meant of his blessing them some other way, and chiefly of giving them his Holy Spirit.

But what followed upon the people's 'bringing young children

unto Christ?' Why, it is said, 'his disciples rebuked them that brought them;' and blamed their boldness and forwardness in so doing. They, who brought the infants, no doubt believed Christ to be the true 'Messias,' and conceived some hopes of a blessing from him, both for them and their children, to whom the promise belonged; but the disciples checked their confidence, and were displeased at them, either because they heard their Master requiring faith and repentance in all that came to him, of which they knew infants to be utterly incapable, or because they would try their Master's affection towards children, whether he would receive them into covenant under the gospel, as they were under the law; or else thinking it beneath the dignity of their Master, to be concerned with children; or whatever else might move them thereunto, it is certain the disciples reproved the presumption of those that brought them.

But our Saviour's carriage towards them was quite different, for he commended their faith, rebuked the ignorance and want of charity in his disciples, and took occasion from thence to shew his tender care and affection to young children: for the next words tell us, that 'when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.' Where by 'suffering them' is meant, not barely a permission, but a precept, commanding them to come, or be brought unto him; and the term added, 'forbid them not,' denotes the removing all lets and hinderances in the way of their coming to him.

The reason whereof here given is, because 'of such is the kingdom of God.' Where by the 'kingdom of God' is meant, both his kingdom of grace here, and of glory hereafter: and our Saviour affirms here of children, that they are the members of the one, and heirs to the other, and therefore may not be forbid to be brought to him.

Yea, he is so far from excluding them from the kingdom of heaven, that he propounds them as a pattern to those that expect an entrance into it. Matt. xviii. 3, &c. 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children (saith he), ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Ye must imitate the innocency and simplicity of little children, and be as free from pride, prejudice, malice and deceit as they, before ye can be received into the heavenly mansions. 'Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as a little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; and whoso receiveth one such little child in my name (saith Christ), receiveth me.' ver. 4, 5. By which we see the tender love and regard that Christ bears to poor infants, recommending them to the care and kindness of his disciples, and rebuking those that refuse or reject them. Of whom he farther declares in this gospel, that 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein:' meaning, that we must be of the humble, meek and tractable

disposition of children, to fit us for the kingdom of grace now, and of glory hereafter. And therefore St. Peter exhorts, to 'lay aside all guile and hypocrisy, all envying and evil speaking, and as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.' 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2. This is the temper of Christianity, and that which can alone qualify us for an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

When our Saviour had thus vindicated the cause of young children, that are unable to speak for themselves, and declared them capable of the kingdom of heaven, he proceeded to bless them, according to the desire of them that brought them; so the next words tell us, that 'he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them and blessed them.' His taking 'them up in his arms' signifies, they were babes, or tender infants, that could not help themselves; his putting 'his hands upon them,' betokened his conveying his grace and mercy to them, which he often did by that ceremony; and by his blessing them, we are to understand, his giving to them his Holy Spirit, that as upon Moses laying on his hands upon the seventy elders, God put his Spirit into them. Numb. xi. 17. So Christ by the same ceremony conveys to infants the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost: and being thus capacitated for grace and glory, they may not be denied the rights and privileges of the Church here.

But for the better understanding of this gospel, and why it is ordered by the Church to be read upon this occasion, together with the exhortation and thanksgiving that follow it, we must note, that 'baptism' is now the seal of the covenant under the gospel, as circumcision was of old under the law. Now a covenant, you know, is ever between two parties, wherein some conditions are agreed and engaged to be performed on each side. The covenant of circumcision was between God and the people of Israel, wherein he promised to 'be their God,' to protect and provide for them, and to deliver them from all their enemies; and they to 'be his people,' to serve and obey him, and to walk in his laws, which he set before them, and this he accordingly did, whilst they stuck to him and kept his commandments.

The covenant of 'baptism' is between God and the children of believing parents, to whom the promise is made: now what is promised on God's part is held forth to us in this gospel; where, though God be in heaven, yet his ministers or ambassadors here on earth, declare out of his holy word, his willingness to receive infants into his favour, that he will be a Father to them, and own them for his children, to take a peculiar care of them, and provide an eternal inheritance for them: so the Church sets forth more at large in the following exhortation, saying,—

'Beloved, ye hear in this gospel the words of our Saviour Christ, how he commanded the children to be brought unto him; how he blamed those that would have kept them from him; how he exhorteth all men to follow their innocency. Ye perceive

how, by his outward gesture and deed, he declared his good will towards them; for he embraced them in his arms, he laid his hands upon them and blessed them.' By all which he hath given abundant security of his love and kindness to young children, that they are capable of grace and glory, and shall in due time be partakers of both.

From whence the Church exhorts to cast off all doubts and fears on God's part, and to rest assured, that he will fulfil his promise to a tittle. 'Doubt ye not therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will likewise favourably receive this present infant, that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy, that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom.' From this persuasion of our heavenly Father's good will towards this infant, and of his favourable allowing this charitable work, in bringing him to his holy baptism, the Church hath prescribed a devout form of thanksgiving for these inestimable benefits; with some pious petitions, suited to so gracious a dispensation.

The form begins with the usual epithets of 'Almighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father;' the first denoting his power, the second his eternity, and the third his fatherly love and goodness towards us; all which serve to beget a holy boldness and confidence in him. After which follows the presenting of 'our humble thanks, for his vouchsafing to call us to the knowledge of his grace and faith in him:' our first parents, by affecting too much knowledge lost all, and by aspiring to be as gods, knowing good and evil, became as beasts, destitute of the true knowledge of both. Insomuch, that all the sons and posterity of Adam come into the world in a state of spiritual blindness and darkness, 'having their understandings darkened, through the ignorance that is in them.' Hence St. Paul told the Ephesians, that 'they were sometimes darkness,' void of all saving knowledge of God, or Christ, or themselves, 'the god of this world having blinded their eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them.'

But by baptism we are translated 'from this darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God;' by which we are made 'the children of light,' and are called to the knowledge of God's grace and faith in Christ. From whence the Church proceeds to offer up two petitions, to enable us to make a further progress in the true religion, into which we are entered; and they are, that God would 'increase this knowledge and confirm this faith in us evermore.' For the First,—

The knowledge we here pray for the increase of, is that of the mysteries of the gospel, and all divine truths, especially the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, which St. John declares to be 'life eternal.' chap. xvii. 3. St. Paul counted all other knowledge to be but 'dross and dung in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.' Phil. iii. 8.

And therefore told the Corinthians, that he 'desired to know nothing among them, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.' 1 Cor. ii. 2. For the increase of this knowledge he often prays for himself and others, that they may 'abound in knowledge and in all judgment;' that they may 'grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' For the Colossians, he tells them, that he 'ceased not to pray for them, that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.' Col. i. 9. For this we pray here for infants, which are admitted by baptism into a state of grace, and for ourselves, who were admitted into it in the same manner. And as we pray for the increase of knowledge, so do we—

Secondly, For the 'confirming our faith in him evermore,' that we stagger not through unbelief, but continue steadfast in faith, giving glory to God, 'holding fast the profession of it without wavering;' that we be not shaken, but firmly built up in our most holy faith, neither undermining it by infidelity, nor deserting it by apostasy: but praying, as our Saviour did for St. Peter, 'that our faith fail not;' and begging grace to persevere in it to the end, that we may be neither seduced by the smiles, nor scared from it by the frowns of the world.

Lastly, The Church concludes this thanksgiving with a petition for the infant to be baptized, saying, 'Give thy Holy Spirit to this infant, that he may be born again, and be made an heir of everlasting salvation:' where we beg for him the regeneration of the spirit, for by his first birth, he is born in sin, and can have no right or title to heaven, where 'no unclean thing can enter;' and therefore a second birth is needful, to purify and fit him for that high and holy place; and that is, by 'water and the Holy Ghost,' without which none can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we see the sense of this gospel, and of the exhortation and thanksgiving thereupon; all which shew us the readiness of God Almighty to receive young children into the covenant, and to grant them the favours and blessings annexed to it; from whence we may learn,—

First, The great error, as well as folly of denying 'infant baptism,' by which some would exclude those from the favours and privileges of the gospel, to whom our Saviour declares they do of right belong: when Christ says, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not;' these say, No, they are not fit to come, and must be kept from him. This is great injustice, as well as ingratitude, to shut the gates of mercy against poor infants, for whom Christ hath opened them; and to debar them of the kingdom of heaven, which our Saviour saith is theirs; but of this see more in the 3d Part of the Catechism. Vol. 2. Disc. 8.

To conclude, let us be careful to bring young children to Christ's holy baptism, who being within the covenant, let us not deny them the sign and seal of it. Moreover, this being the

door of entrance into the Church, and the ordinary means of salvation, let us not defer the doing of this good office for them; lest, by any dangerous delays, we wholly deprive them of the benefit of it. And now, having seen what is promised on God's part in this covenant, we are next to shew what is engaged on ours, which must be shewed in the following discourse.

DISCOURSE CCXCIV.

THE INTERROGATORIES IN BAPTISM.

1 PETER iii. part of the 21st verse. — *Baptism doth now save us, not by the putting away the filth of the flesh, but by the answer of a good conscience towards God.*

IN my last, I shewed baptism to be a covenant, which evermore supposes two parties, between whom it is made; with some certain terms and conditions to be promised and performed on each side. The baptismal covenant is entered into, and ratified between God and man.

The terms and conditions on God's part were the subject of the foregoing discourse, which I shewed to be the remission of sin, both original and actual; the giving of the Holy Ghost for the renewing of our natures; with the promise of farther supplies of divine grace for obtaining of everlasting life.

I proceed now (as the Church directs) to the terms and conditions to be entered into, and engaged on our part, in order to the attaining of these ends: of which I shall discourse from these words of St. Peter, 'Baptism now saveth us, not by putting away the filth of the flesh,' as in the legal purifications, 'but by the answer of a good conscience towards God;' which supposes some questions or interrogatories put to that end, an assent or reply whereunto is styled 'the answer of a good conscience towards God.'

For which reason, the minister thus addresses to those, who bring children to baptism, in the following admonition, 'Dearly beloved, ye have brought this child here to be baptized; ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive him, to release him of his sins, to sanctify him with the Holy Ghost, to give him the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life;' which are the things promised on God's part. 'Ye have heard also, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath promised in his gospel to grant all these things, that ye have prayed for; which promise he for his part will most surely keep and perform:' for he is faithful that hath promised, and will not suffer his truth to fail; and so may be safely trusted and relied upon. Wherefore after this promise made by Christ, this infant must also faithfully for his part promise, 'that he will renounce the devil and all his works; and constantly believe God's holy word; and obediently keep his

commandments.' These are the conditions engaged on the part of all that are baptized, to wit, repentance, by renouncing the devil, and all that is evil: faith, by constantly believing God's holy word; and obedience, by keeping of his commandments. Which things infants, by reason of their tender age, being unable to engage for themselves, and likewise being incapable of admission into the covenant without it, the mercy of God, and the charity of the Church, have allowed them to promise these things by their sureties, until they come of age to take them upon themselves.

Which practice is both ancient and reasonable; for the antiquity of it, some have derived this custom from the Jews, who in the circumcising of infants, had some that brought and undertook for them, called *susceptores*, or sureties, as Buxtorf, a learned Jew, informs us. *Synag. cap. 2.* And some have probably enough affirmed, that the 'witnesses' mentioned, Isa. viii. 2, at the naming of a child, were of the same nature with our sureties, or undertakers. They are styled with us by the name of godfathers and godmothers, the use of which in the primitive church was very early; for we find most of the ancient fathers often mentioning them in their discourses of baptism; as might be easily shewed, were it needful.

And as this custom is very ancient, so is it very reasonable too; the nature of the ordinance seems necessarily to require it; for as circumcision was a covenant of old, so is baptism now; wherein, as there are benefits and blessings, which God gives his word to bestow, so there are duties and conditions on our part, which we give our word to perform, to be capable of them. And because infants cannot promise these things for themselves, the engagement of others is accepted in their behalf. Beside, all nations have allowed children guardians, to contract for them in worldly affairs, which being for their benefit, they are in their riper years as much bound to perform them, as if they were made in their own person. In like manner, the Church hath ever allowed them spiritual guardians, to undertake for them, and to look after the spiritual concerns of their souls and another life; which are of far greater consequence than the perishing concerns of this. But of this, see more 1st Part Catech. Disc. 4.

Now, this baptismal covenant or stipulation, hath been ever made by question and answer; as hath been observed by all the ancient fathers; and St. Peter here seems to refer to it, by styling it 'the answer of a good conscience.' Accordingly, our Church here puts queries or interrogatories to the sureties, to answer them in the first person in the child's name, with whom the covenant or contract is principally made. The questions or interrogatories here put are these four:—

First, It is demanded of each of them in particular: 'Dost thou in the name of this child renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous

desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that thou wilt not follow, nor be led by them?' To which the answer is, 'I renounce them all.' For the better understanding of this, we must note, that the three great enemies of Christ, and of our salvation, are the devil, the world, and the flesh. Which therefore, at our entrance upon Christianity, we solemnly renounce with the greatest defiance and detestation: of this renunciation we read often in the fathers, which, as Salvian tells us, was done in the primitive times with great solemnity. And because Satan is the first and great enemy of Christ's kingdom, and his works tend to the subverting of our salvation, we first 'renounce him and all his works:' for we cannot be listed under Christ, till we enter into a holy war, and engage to fight against the devil. Now, the renouncing the devil consists chiefly in these three things: the resisting his usurped power and dominion in the world; the repelling his temptations; and the rejecting of his works.

For the 1st, The devil had, before Christ's coming, a visible kingdom in the world, in which he exercised an exorbitant power over the bodies and souls of infidels and pagans: hence he is said to be 'the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that ruleth in the children of disobedience.' 2 Cor. iv. 4. Now when any were converted from heathenism to Christianity, they were openly to disclaim and declare against this usurped power of Satan, and to abjure his kingdom, who were therefore said to be 'turned from the power of Satan unto God.' Acts xx. 18. And by engaging to fight under Christ's banner, and to be his faithful soldiers and servants unto their lives' end, they utterly renounced all the power of the devil: and as they thus cast off his power, which we are still to do,—

So did they, 2dly, resist and repel all his temptations: this our Saviour first did himself, in his own person, when the devil set upon him in the wilderness, with the artillery of his temptations; where Christ perfectly foiled and baffled him in all his attempts, and hath thereby so weakened and broken his power, that 'if we resist him, he will flee from us:' which is encouragement enough to withstand all his assaults.

3dly, Another way of renouncing the devil, is by rejecting his works; these in general are all kinds of sin and wickedness, which owe their rise to the devil, and proceed from the wicked one. But there are some particular witnesses, that are more especially from their father, the devil, and are more properly styled his works; such are lying, hatred, envy, malice, idolatries, witchcraft, strife, seditions, heresies, and the like: these have the particular marks and signature of the devil, by which he endeavours to deceive mankind, and to draw them into the same condemnation with himself. And as our Saviour came to destroy those works of the devil, so do we here in baptism more especially renounce them.

Secondly, The next enemy here renounced, is 'the world, with all the pomps and vanities thereof:' the world hath charms to allure us from Christ, and frowns to affright us from him; sometimes it shews its bright side, and presents to our view the enticing baits of honour, the splendour of riches, the allurements of pleasure, with other tempting gaieties, that administer to pride and vanity, to inveigle us into a love and admiration of them. At other times it shews its blind and black side of persecutions, adversity, and trouble, to make us offended at, and forsake our Saviour. But St. John cautions us against the first, saying, 'Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' 1 John ii. 15. And Christ himself hath armed us against the other, saying, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' John xvi. 33. By his victory he hath enabled us to overcome the world, and to renounce both the terrors and temptations of it: so that by adhering to Christ, neither of them shall be able to hurt us; for 'this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

Thirdly, The last enemy to be renounced, is 'the flesh,' with all the sinful lusts and desires of it; such as 'adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,' and the like; of which the apostle declares, that 'they, who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Gal. v. 19, 21. God hath, indeed, allowed us a lawful and moderate use of sensual pleasures, he hath provided objects suited to the cravings of our natural appetite, and prescribed the manner and measures of enjoying them; so that he denies us nothing, but the inordinate love and use of those things that tend to his dishonour, to the decay of our own bodies, and the destruction of our own soul; and therefore St. Peter advises to 'abstain from all fleshly lusts, that war against the soul,' 1 Pet. ii. 11; which they do, by destroying the peace and welfare of soul and body: and this shews it to be our wisdom and interest, as well as duty, to renounce and mortify them. And so much for the first interrogatory, put in baptism, about the 'renouncing of our ghostly enemies;' the answer whereunto, 'I renounce them all,' if truly observed and practised, is the 'answer of a good conscience,' by which baptism is said to 'save' us.

The second interrogatory, put to the sureties in the child's name, is concerning his faith; the minister asking, 'Dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, &c.' where, reciting all the Articles of the creed, inquiry is made into their faith in them; to which the answer is, 'All this I steadfastly believe.'

After renouncing the old masters, viz., The devil and all his works, together with the temptations of the world and the flesh, we are to betake ourselves to a new Master, and to become the disciples and followers of the blessed Jesus; and because faith

in him is a necessary requisite and condition of baptism and salvation by him, as we read Mark xvi. 18, and Acts viii. 37, we must give up ourselves to the conduct of his precepts and instructions, for *oportet discentem credere;* he that will learn must believe his teacher. Accordingly our Saviour exacts from all his followers a belief of all the Articles of the christian faith, and admits none into his school, without a promise of embracing his doctrine. That we may not be at a loss what, or how much to believe, he hath given us a rule, or measure of faith in the Apostles' Creed; which we are neither to exceed, by going beyond it, and believing more, nor to come short of it, by believing less; but to 'hold fast the profession of this faith without wavering.' They that let it go, either by inconstancy or infidelity, are guilty of the breach of this baptismal covenant, and will dearly rue for it at the last day.

So that if any would tempt you to atheism, by denying the being, or providence of God, stoutly resist them, by adhering to the first article of your creed; wherein you profess to believe one almighty and independent Being, who made all things by his power, and still preserves them by his providence.

If any would draw you into deism, by 'denying the Lord that bought you,' resolutely withstand all such attempts, by sticking close to the following Articles; wherein you declare your belief of all, that Christ did, and suffered for man's redemption: and the like may be said of all other necessary points and Articles of faith, in which you are to continue steadfast, with an unshaken firmness and constancy. This is the second interrogatory, about the truth and firmness of our faith, to which to give a full answer, it is asked,—

3dly, In the name of the child, 'Wilt thou be baptized in this faith?' to which the answer is, 'That is my desire;' which if duly performed, is 'the answer of a good conscience towards God.' The design of this question, is to unite the baptized party to that society, wherein this christian faith is professed; and to know his willingness of being joined to it in the bond of peace, which is by being initiated into it by the solemn rite of baptism. This the godfathers declare to be the desire of those that are to be baptized, to wit, to be made members of the christian Church, in which this holy faith is received and maintained. And that they are not driven into it by any force or compulsion, 'but of a willing and ready mind;' for God will have no unwilling servants, that are forced or driven into his Church, and cares for no such backward sacrifices, that must be dragged to the altar; and therefore it is declared here to be the desire of our hearts, to be baptized in this faith, which is the third interrogatory.

The fourth and last is, 'Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of thy life?' to which the answer is, 'I will.' This question relates to our obedience and resolutions of a holy life, and as we before

promised to forsake all evil, so do we engage here, to follow that which is good. Every one that nameth the name of Christ, or is made a Christian, must not only 'depart from all iniquity,' but resolve to 'lead a godly, righteous, and sober life.' His entrance into this holy society engages him to all purity of life and conversation, to obey God's will, and to walk in the ways of his commandments.

And this obedience must be first unfeigned and sincere, 'obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered to them.' Next, it must be universal and complete, extending to the whole law and will of God, not picking and choosing what we like best, and leaving the rest, but having an equal regard to all God's commandments; for being all stamped with the same Divine authority, we cannot slight the least without despising the authority that runs through the whole, which is the reason of that saying of St. James, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and offend in one point, is guilty of all.' Chap. ii. 10.

Lastly, Our obedience must be constant and lasting to our lives' end: for as we must hold out to the end of a race, to obtain the prize, so must we persevere in well-doing to our lives' end, to attain eternal life.

These are the questions or interrogatories put to the sureties in the name of the child to be baptized, the answer whereunto is here styled, 'the answer of a good conscience towards God,' by which baptism is said to 'save us.'

Upon the whole then, we see the terms and conditions of the baptismal covenant both on God's part and ours, which he for his part will most surely keep and perform, having pawned his truth and faithfulness to make them good.

It remains then that we be ever mindful of ours, often thinking and meditating on these things, begging of God's grace, and using our best endeavours to perform what we promised at the font in the whole course of our lives, and that will surely bring us to life everlasting. But of this, see more in the first Part of the Catechism, about the baptismal vow.

DISCOURSE CCXCV.

THE PETITIONS FOR THE GRACE OF BAPTISM.

ROM. vi. 4.—*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father; even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

HAVING shewed baptism to be a covenant between God and us, established on certain promises and conditions on each side, wherein God Almighty engages to be our God and Father, and we to be his faithful people and servants to our lives' end; we next beg of him grace, to enable us to perform our part of the

covenant, because there can be no failure of his, that we may receive the benefits of baptism.

And here in the ancient liturgies are inserted divers exorcisms or prayers for the expelling of Satan, and all evil spirits out of the baptized party; and for the entrance of God's Holy Spirit, with its gifts and graces into him; instead whereof our Church hath appointed some short pious petitions, selected out of the holy Scripture, for the renewing and sanctifying our nature, and the obtaining of spiritual strength and power against our ghostly enemies.

The first whereof is in these words, 'O merciful God, grant that the old Adam in this child may be so buried, that the new man be raised up in him.' Where by the 'old Adam' is meant, the original corruption of our nature, contracted by the sin of our first parents, and derived down by natural descent to all their posterity; called in Scripture 'the old man, or the body of sin;' this we pray here may be mortified and destroyed in the infant to be baptized, which was indeed the main end and design of baptism. By the 'new man,' we understand the graces and pious dispositions of the soul, wrought in us by the Holy Spirit of God, whereby our nature is renewed, and regenerated to another and better life; and this we pray may succeed in this infant in the room of the former, that 'old things may pass away, and all things become new in him.'

This is expressed in the text by being 'buried with Christ in baptism unto death,' alluding to the old custom then in use of plunging the baptized person over head and ears, and in a manner burying him in the water; and by 'raising up the new man in him, that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' Meaning, the coming up again like a new person out of the water, as Jesus did out of the grave at his resurrection. By both is signified our earnest desire, that the old corrupt nature we derive from Adam may be mortified in this child, and the new nature we receive from Christ, may be found in him; that all that is evil may be rooted out, and all manner of good may be planted and grow in him. In short, we beg that he may be born again in the laver of regeneration, and thereby delivered both from the guilt and power of all original corruption. The First petition here offered.

The Second is like unto it, viz. 'that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him.' These petitions differ only, as the effect doth from the cause; these carnal lusts and affections proceeding from the original corruption and depravedness of nature, are prayed against as the evil effects and consequences of the former. Out of a corrupt heart 'proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies.' All carnal affections and inclinations to lust, pride, covetousness, and the like, spring from

original sin, and are as so many branches coming from that root of bitterness; and as the foregoing petition designed to dam up this fountain of impurity, so this seeks to hinder or divert the corrupt streams that flow from it. While such bad inclinations remain and are alive in us, we shall be carried away with the tide of ungodliness, and therefore we pray that all such carnal affections may die in us; and that all things belonging to the Spirit, such as love, joy, patience, temperance, brotherly kindness and charity, may live and grow in us. Now this cannot be, unless the seeds of these virtues be sown in us betimes, for if we begin not with the Spirit, we shall end with the flesh. And therefore we pray here in the behalf of infants, that they may be purified by the washing of water, and the 'renewing of the Holy Ghost.' That the lusts of the flesh, like the house of Saul, may grow 'weaker and weaker,' and the graces of the Spirit, like the house of David, 'wax stronger and stronger,' or in the apostle's phrase, they may be 'dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' To which end, the apostle directs them in the course of their conversation, to 'put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and to put on the new man, that after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' Eph. iv. 22, &c. Where he wills them to strive against the corruption of nature, occasioned by the first transgression; and to mortify those deceitful lusts, which deceive the expectations of all that look for pleasure and satisfaction from them, which they can never yield, endeavouring for that primitive purity and holiness they once had, when they came out of the hands of their Creator, in his own image and likeness.

Thirdly, Another petition here put up for baptized infants, is for spiritual strength to vanquish and subdue their ghostly enemies, in those words, 'Grant that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh.' Christianity in Scripture is often called and compared to a warfare; when we enter upon it, we do as it were enter the field, and are beset with enemies on every side, and it requires more than ordinary force and strength to conquer them. The enemies are the devil, the world, and the flesh, all very subtle and powerful foes. The devil is compared to a 'serpent' for his subtlety, and to a 'lion' for his cruelty, and he is still 'going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour.' The world hath many baits and temptations to catch and ensnare us; the riches, the honours, the power and the pleasures of the world, are all apt to take with frail men, and to entrap them to their utter ruin. The flesh is an inbred domestic foe, that lies in our bosom, and is ever ready to betray and yield us up into the hands of our enemies; so that we seem to be overmatched in this combat, being to contend with the flesh within, the devil without, and the world round about us, and indeed we cannot hope to

encounter them with any success by our own strength; but Christ hath overcome the world, and hath enabled us too, by the strength of our faith, to overcome it. For that gives us such a prospect of the transcendent glories of the next world, as may make us easily trample on, and triumph over all the vanities of this.

As for Satan, the apostle tells us, 'if we resist the devil he will flee from us.' He hath overcome him for us too, and armed us with sufficient power and force to overcome him. For he hath acquainted us with his devices, and hath promised grace enough to withstand all his wiles. If we yield not to him, he cannot hurt us, and if we 'resist him steadfast in the faith,' we shall be 'more than conquerors over him, through Christ that loved us.' And as for the lusts of the flesh, which are apt to prevail so far as to degrade and enslave mankind; his grace, if duly used and sued for, will be sufficient to subdue and conquer them: it is the letting loose the reins and running into temptation, that makes them get such ground upon us; if we stand upon our guard, and set ourselves with resolution against them, we should not be so easily drawn away, or led captive by them: but if our own strength be at any time too weak to resist the violence and importunity of the temptation, we are to betake ourselves to our prayers; to call in the aid and assistance of heaven, and to beg his grace who is able to subdue all things to himself. This is what the Church here orders to be done in the behalf of infants to be baptized; knowing the natural impotence and simplicity of children, and how unable they are to withstand the power and policy of those they are to encounter, we implore for them help from above, that they may be able to stand in the evil day; and not only vanquish, but triumph over all the opposition they are like to meet with from a wicked world, which is a very useful and necessary petition.

Lastly, The minister prays, that 'all that are dedicated to God by his office and ministry, may also be endued with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded through the mercy of our blessed Lord and Saviour, who lives and governs all things world without end.'

Where, First, all baptized persons are said to be 'dedicated unto God;' they are taken out of the world, and made his peculiar children and servants, and for that reason are said to be 'holy unto the Lord:' so God would have them esteem themselves, and be looked upon by others, Levit. xx. 24, 26, 'I am the Lord your God (saith he) which hath separated you from other people, therefore shall ye be holy unto me; for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.' Where the separation of persons from the common herd of other folk, makes them God's own peculiar, and are to be esteemed holy upon that account: now as the Jews of old were separated from others, by the rite of 'circumcision,' so Christians are now

distinguished by the sacrament of 'baptism,' by which they are dedicated unto God, and entered into his Church; then are they listed in his service, to fight under his banner, against his and our enemies; and by thus becoming his faithful soldiers and servants to their lives' end, they are said to be devoted and consecrated to him.

And this is here said to be done 'by the office and ministry of the priest,' that is, by persons duly called and authorized thereunto; for Christ commissioned an order of men to baptize, as well as to teach the people, and confined both to their office and ministry, insomuch as none may presume to 'preach except they be sent;' so none may take upon them to baptize, without a lawful call and commission for so doing.

And they that are thus qualified to receive others into the Church by this sacred rite of 'baptism,' are here directed to pray, that the persons so received may be 'endued with heavenly virtues;' that being called out of the world, they may escape the pollutions of it, and having taken Christ's name upon them, they may endeavour to adorn it, and to walk every way worthy of it; that they may eschew all things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same: 'Adding to their faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: for if these things be in them and abound, they will not be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.' 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, &c.

And as they beg of God to endue such baptized children with heavenly graces and virtues, so do they add their prayers, that they may 'be everlastingly rewarded for them;' meaning, that they may receive the reward of eternal life, by promise annexed to them: and that not for any merit in their own righteousness and good works, but alone through the mercy and merits of our blessed Lord, who governs and disposes all things according to his own abundant grace and goodness; which pious and pithy petitions are ordered to be put up in the sole name and mediation of Jesus Christ.

These things are to be seriously minded by those that administer this holy rite of 'baptism,' and to be after earnestly pressed upon those, for whose sake and benefit it is performed; that the former may observe the rules, and the latter attain the ends of its institution: so shall we, who are buried with Christ in 'baptism' unto death, raise again by the power of his resurrection to newness of life here, and to a life of endless bliss and glory hereafter.

DISCOURSE CCXCVI.

THE CONSECRATING THE WATER.

ACTS ii. 38.—*Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Together with MATT. xxviii. 19. *Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

AFTER some pious petitions, for the sanctifying of infants, there follows a collect for consecrating the water, in which they are to be baptized. Water being a cleansing and purifying element, is the fittest emblem to set forth the washing away the sins of mankind; and as in the old creation, the Spirit's moving upon the face of the waters, brought the rude unformed chaos into a beautiful and orderly structure; so in the new creation, the Holy Spirit's moving upon the waters of 'baptism,' removes darkness and confusion, and brings light, order, and comeliness, into the soul. And because all things are 'sanctified by the word of God and prayer,' therefore the Church here hath ordered a prayer, for the sanctifying of water, to the mystical washing away of sin. In this collect or prayer, after the titles of 'Almighty and everlasting God,' which signify the greatness, and endless duration of the Divine power; we may observe,—

First, a reference to the rise, occasion or original of 'baptism,' which was, from the 'dearly beloved Son of God Jesus Christ's shedding out of his most precious side both water and blood, for the forgiveness of our sins.'

Secondly, The institution and form of baptism, which was Christ's 'giving commandment to his disciples, to go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.'

Thirdly, The application of it to the present occasion in these words, 'Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of this congregation, by sanctifying this water to the mystical washing away of sin;' and blessing the infant to be baptized in it, with 'fulness of grace,' and 'numbering it among his faithful and elect children.' These are the principal heads of this collect, of which I shall speak from the words read, from which they were mainly taken.

For the First, The rise and occasion of baptism is said to be from Christ's 'shedding out of his most precious side, water and blood.' This is gathered from a passage in the history of Christ's crucifixion; where from the soldier's spear piercing his side, is said forthwith to gush out 'both water and blood,' John xix. 34, which the fathers generally interpret as tokens or emblems of the two sacraments, the water representing 'baptism,' and the blood the 'Lord's supper.' But this being spoken to in the Catechism, Part 3, Disc. 1., I shall say no more to it here,

observing only the end and design of both, which is here said to be 'for the forgiveness of our sins,' that is, for the expiation and doing them away, to clear us from the guilt, and 'cleanse us' from the filth of 'all unrighteousness.' So St. Peter in the text told his converts, who were pricked at the heart, for what they had done about Christ's sufferings, and asked, What they should do? to whom Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;' and then 'you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost,' not only to seal your pardon for what is past, but to prevent doing the same, or like evils for the time to come. From whence I proceed,—

Secondly, To the institution and form of baptism, which our Saviour commanded in these words, 'Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost:' where our Saviour being about to leave the world, and go to his Father, committed that to his apostles and disciples, which he before performed in his own person; and as he had taught and instructed them himself, so he orders them to 'go and teach' others, making them his disciples, as he had made them, using the ceremony of washing to that end, and 'teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever he had commanded them,' adding for their encouragement a promise to 'be with them and their successors alway, to the end of the world.' Where he confines the office of teaching and baptizing, only to his own apostles and disciples, and those that succeed them in the work of the ministry, so that none else may presume to do either: for as none may venture to preach the gospel, except they be sent, and lawfully called thereunto; so none may presume to baptize, but such as are duly authorized to teach the people. So that persons unordained may as well take upon them to preach as to baptize. Hence Tertullian forbad all women to baptize; Epiphanius accounts it absurd to allow them to execute that office; and the fathers generally condemn all baptizing by any unauthorized persons; suitable hereunto our Church confines this office only to lawfully-ordained ministers, and where such a one may not be had, it is better to omit it for the present, and leave them to God's mercy, than violate his own institution.

The next thing to be considered in the institution of baptism is the form of administering it, which is, 'in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Which being explained in the Fifth Discourse of the Third Part of the Catechism, I refer the reader to it.

And now, the Church having shewed the institution of baptism, together with the nature, end, and benefits of that ordinance, it proceeds to apply all to the present occasion, and begs of God, that these good effects may be accomplished in the infant to be baptized, and the promised blessings bestowed on it, saying, 'Regard, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy congrega-

tion,' &c.; where the people, assembled on this occasion, are supposed all to join in prayer in behalf of the present infant, which is a duty and office of great charity; with whom the minister likewise joins, that their prayers may be effectual, and obtain the desired success. The things prayed for by both, are chiefly 'the sanctifying the water, to the mystical washing away of sin,' and the 'descent of the Holy Ghost;' which things are frequently put together in holy Scripture, and styled by St. Paul 'the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he sheds on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' Titus iii. 5, 6.

For the sanctifying of water to this purpose, we find it the constant practice and petition of the Church upon this occasion, and is abundantly warranted by that of the apostle, 'all things are sanctified by the word of God and prayer.' 1 Tim. iv. 5. And it is God alone that can confer the Holy Spirit, and cause it to descend upon the waters of baptism, and make them medicinal to the health of our souls, as our Saviour did the waters of Siloam for the welfare of the body. John ix. 7. Both which we are encouraged to ask, from his willingness and readiness to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask: and therefore we beseech him, to 'grant to the child to be baptized to receive the fulness of his grace, and ever remain in the number of his faithful and elect children, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

First, I say, we pray that he may receive the fulness of divine grace, and be replenished with the dew of his heavenly benediction, that he may be enabled to purge away his natural corruption, and withstand the force and temptations of his ghostly enemies; that as the Holy Spirit descended at the baptism of our Saviour, in the shape of a dove, so he would be pleased to send down the same Holy Spirit on this infant, to effect that in him which otherwise he cannot have, and to convey to him the blessings of baptism. We ask not the changing the substance of the water, but to impregnate it with the virtue of cleansing and purifying the soul, and to wash away the pollution of sin: to which end we pray, that the child may be filled with such abundance of God's grace, as may work in him dispositions fit to qualify him to receive such inestimable favours.

Secondly, We pray, that he may ever remain in the number of God's faithful and elect children. We read of some in the Revelations, who for their apostasy had their names blotted out of the book of life. Rev. xxii. 19. And of others, who though once enlightened, and adopted by the Holy Spirit, yet afterward fell away, and lost the prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus; for which reason we beg of God, in behalf of the baptized infant, not only to admit him into the number of his elect and peculiar people, but to preserve him in it, that he may persevere and hold out to the end, 'making his calling and election sure, by keeping the faith,' and adorning the profession into which he is

baptized, by a holy and suitable conversation; that having begun in the Spirit, he may not end in the flesh, but may be 'kept by the grace of God, through faith, unto salvation.'

These are the petitions which the Church, by way of preparation, hath ordered to be put up for the infant to be baptized.

After this, the minister taking the child into his hands, according to the example of our blessed Saviour, who 'took the children that were brought unto him into his arms, laid his hands upon them and blessed them.' Mark xiii. Taking, I say, the child into his arms, he bids the godfathers and godmothers to 'name the child,' it being fit at this new birth to give it a new name; which was ever done by the sureties or witnesses, at the time of circumcision in the Old Testament, and of baptism in the New; which custom continues in all the reformed churches to this day, for which see the Fourth and Fifth Discourses on the First Part of the Church Catechism.

From hence the minister proceeds to administer the holy rite of baptism, either by dipping, as was usual in those hotter regions where the apostles baptized; or by sprinkling, as it hath obtained in more northern and colder countries; our Church allowing both, as the strength or weakness of the child will admit; for 'God in some cases will have mercy, and not sacrifice;' and it is not the quantity of water, but God's appointing and blessing it to holy purposes, that gives it all its efficacy: to which end, the minister uses the words of our Saviour, saying, '*N*, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' which form of words is by Christ's command become so necessary and essential to this ordinance, that no baptisms are accounted regular or valid without it.

After this, follows the reception of the baptized child into the church, in these words, 'We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock,' &c.

Where the minister, as God's herald or servant, solemnly admits him into Christ's family, and publicly declares him a member of his visible Church; that, whereas he was before 'an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise, he is now become a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God.' And he that was sometime 'afar off,' is, by this sacrament of initiation, 'engrafted into him, and brought nigh by the blood of his cross.' For which reason the minister, at the receiving of him into the Church, 'signs him with the sign of the cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his life's end:' which is signified by the receiving Christ's mark of the cross in his forehead. I know some sectaries and dissenters have started some idle and frivolous exceptions against this ceremony, looking upon it as a sacramental sign,

similitude, or image, forbidden in the second commandment; and likewise much abused by the Papists, as tending to idolatry and superstition, and therefore would have it laid aside, or left at liberty to use it or not, as men are satisfied about it in their own minds.

But is it fit that so ancient a rite, or usage of the Church, (for we find it used by the primitive fathers in honour of our Saviour, and confirmed too by the authority of our own and other Churches,) should be sacrificed to the levity of ignorant innovators, and left at every one's pleasure, whether he will observe it or not? Must not this prostitute the honour of Christ and his Church, together with the dignity and authority of Government, to be disobeyed in so small, and yet so memorable and useful a ceremony? which is used merely as a memorative sign, to put baptized persons in remembrance of Christ's dying and suffering on the cross for their redemption; and to mind them of their duty in taking up the cross at his call, and to follow him by the cross to a crown of endless glory.

The Church doth not make or intend it for a thing necessary or essential to baptism, which she owns may be full and complete without it; nor does she ascribe any thing of a sacrament to it, being neither enjoined by Christ, as a means of grace, having no promise of grace annexed to it, nor given as a seal or pledge to assure us thereof, which are the necessary ingredients of a sacrament. Much less hath it any thing of an image or similitude forbidden in the second commandment, for that prohibits only such likenesses as are made, or worshipped in the room or stead of God, which none can be so weak as to affirm of the cross in baptism. In short, this sign is required only as an honourable badge of our christian profession, to signify that we serve a crucified Saviour, and that we are not ashamed of the cross of Christ, to whom we have dedicated ourselves; but rather glory in it, as our great honour to be listed in the number of his followers; adoring not the sign, but the person represented by it, and is therefore no more to be laid aside for the abuse of it by Papists, than the Scriptures are perverted by schismatics.

DISCOURSE CCXCVII.

THE THANKSGIVING AFTER BAPTISM.

EPHES. v. 20.—*Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

HAVING spoken to the several parts of this excellent office of baptism, our Church closes it with an exhortation to what is to follow after it, and that is, to thanksgiving and prayer, in these words, 'Seeing now, dearly beloved, that this child is regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ's Church, let us give thanks

to Almighty God for these benefits; and with one accord make our prayers unto him, that this child may lead the rest of his life according to this beginning.' Where we are taught, not presently to break up and depart when this holy rite is finished, but to stay awhile to bless and praise God our heavenly Father, for the mercies bestowed upon us in and by it: and to make it our unanimous request, that the child now added to the Church may be enabled to lead a life suitable to it, and may hold on in that christian course, which he hath so happily begun, that in the end he may attain everlasting life.

In order hereunto, the Church directs us to the two great duties of thanksgiving and prayer, beginning with the Lord's Prayer, which may not be omitted in this or any other office of the Church, being the pattern and platform of all our prayers, which are to be formed and gain acceptance by it; but of this enough hath been said elsewhere.

The duty of thanksgiving is prescribed in the following collect: 'We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit,' &c. Of which I shall speak from these words of the apostle, 'Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Where we have,—

First, The great duty of thanksgiving and praise, 'Giving thanks.'

Secondly, The extent of the duty, which must be 'at all times, and for all things.'

Thirdly, The object to whom it must be paid, and that is to 'God the Father.'

Lastly, The manner or means of doing it, and that is 'in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

For the duty of thanksgiving, that consists in the acknowledging and remembering of benefits received; and likewise in making the best return and requital we can for them. We find David, that great master of thanksgiving, acknowledging and recounting the mercies of God upon all occasions, magnifying and extolling them throughout the whole book of Psalms; treasuring them up in his memory, and upon all fit opportunities and occasions, publishing and proclaiming them to the world: often breaking out in such grateful expressions as these, 'O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches!' and, 'O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world!'

Neither did he rest only in verbal acknowledgments, or oral expressions of his goodness: but he studied all real and possible returns and requital of his loving-kindness, frequently saying, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his mercies?' And because he found them unrequitable, he devoted himself wholly to his praise and service. This is the nature of thanksgiving.

But when is this duty to be performed? Why, the text tells

us, 'always,' or at all times. 'Giving thanks always,' not that we should every moment of our time be sounding forth the praises, and giving glory unto God; for that would interfere with other duties, and hinder the whole business of our calling; but that we should be always in a readiness and disposition, to make these grateful acknowledgments, and mingle some pious ejaculations of this kind, with all the affairs of human life. Never casting off the duty through weariness or negligence, but embracing all proper seasons and opportunities of doing it. 'This is to give thanks always,' for we may be said to do that always, which we are still ready to do, and observe the set times appointed for that purpose. He that is ready and prepared at all times to repel the assaults of an enemy, may be said to be always upon his guard, though he may not perhaps stand every minute in a posture of defence. In like manner, we may be truly said to be always thankful, when we are in a constant readiness to acknowledge the favours of Heaven, though we be not always actually on our knees, or in the postures of adoration.

And as we are to be thankful at all times, so are we 'for all things;' not that we are required to return particular thanks for every single benefit we receive at God's hand, for his blessings are innumerable, and heaped upon us every moment; and to make particular acknowledgments for every favour, would take up the whole measure of our time, and leave no room for any other duty; nor would the whole space of our lives be sufficient to answer the obligation. But when we are bid to give thanks for all things, the sense is, that we should be ever ready to return our thanks, not only for the more remarkable acts and instances of Divine Providence, but likewise for the more common mercies we receive at God's hand, which are therefore too apt to pass away unregarded.

We should thank him for our creation, which is the foundation of all other enjoyments; for our redemption, which is the foundation of all our future expectations, for spiritual, as well as temporal blessings: and particularly, as our Church here directs us, for our reception into Christ's Church, by which we are admitted into his family, and made members of his mystical body: for we are taught here to thank God for the great benefits and blessings of baptism, conferred upon us in our infancy, when we were unable to do any thing for ourselves, saying, 'We yield thee most hearty thanks, O merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy Church;' where we have the three great and invaluable blessings bestowed in baptism, for which we are called upon to give our most humble and hearty thanks.

The First whereof is that of 'spiritual regeneration,' or being born again by God's Holy Spirit: this is mentioned by our Saviour, and made necessary to our salvation, John iii. 5, 'Except

ye be regenerate, and born again of water and the Holy Ghost, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven;' that is, neither the kingdom of grace here, nor the kingdom of glory hereafter: for no unclean thing can enter those undefiled regions, and we must be washed and purged from our natural pollutions, before we can be fitted for those mansions of purity. And this is done in our baptism, which is therefore styled by St. Paul, 'The laver or washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;' to which he likewise ascribes our salvation, Tit. iii. 5, and for which we are exhorted to give thanks. As also,—

2dly, For his 'receiving us as his own children by adoption: As many as are led by the Spirit of God (saith the apostle), they are sons of God;' and, elsewhere, 'children of the promise, and heirs of salvation:' by our natural birth we are children of wrath and disobedience, consigned over to death and damnation; but being conducted by the Divine Spirit to the waters of baptism, and there purified and regenerated to a better hope, we become the children of grace, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, which made the apostle say, 'We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;' of which we are assured by the most comfortable experience, 'the Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God.' Rom. viii. 15, 16. For this inestimable favour, we cannot be sufficiently thankful, considering the invaluable privileges we enjoy thereby; such as freedom of access to the throne of grace, to ask mercy to help in time of need: an assurance of God's peculiar care and protection in all the needful times of trouble; and a title to 'an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us.' 1 Pet. i. 4. All which we have by being incorporated into Christ's holy Church, and made members of his mystical body; whereby we, that were strangers and enemies, are taken into his favour and family, and made free denizens of the heavenly Jerusalem; which are matters justly to be thought thankworthy, and call for our loudest praises and adorations.

To these thanksgivings, the Church joins some petitions in the behalf of the persons baptized; humbly beseeching God to grant them grace, so to lead their lives, as those to whom such great favours are vouchsafed; that is, 'being dead unto sin,' by Christ's death, 'and alive unto righteousness,' by his resurrection, 'they may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin; that as they are made partakers of the death of the Son, by being buried with him in baptism; so they may be partakers of his resurrection, by rising again unto newness of life.' So that finally, with the residue of God's holy Church, they may be inheritors of his everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Thus having considered all the necessary and essential parts of this holy office of baptism, there remains only the charge or exhortation to the sureties, which shall be the subject of the next.

DISCOURSE CCXCVII.

THE CHARGE GIVEN TO THE SURETIES.

EPHES. vii. 4, latter part.—*Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

THE last thing to be spoken to in the office of baptism, is the charge or exhortation given in the close of it, to the godfathers and godmothers, about the instruction and religious education of children they undertake for at the font, which being in some measure treated of in the First Part of the Catechism, Disc. 5, will be the more briefly dispatched, and this I shall do from the words read; 'Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Which words are directed chiefly to the natural parents, who are most of all concerned in the welfare of their offspring; and may be well enough applied to those spiritual sureties and undertakers, who voluntarily join with them in so good and charitable a work.

Indeed, the pious education of children is a matter of so great concern, both for the private comfort of families, and the public benefit of whole states and kingdoms, that we cannot take too great care and pains about it. And therefore our Church would not shut up this office, without giving some directions in this important affair, and laying some obligations on the persons concerned in it. Which not being so thoroughly minded and observed as they should be, are to be frequently inculcated and pressed upon them. To which end, the Church here,—

First, Puts them in mind of what they have promised and engaged in the name of those infants they bring to baptism, in these words, 'Forasmuch as this child hath promised by you his sureties to renounce the devil, and all his works, to believe in God, and to serve him:' where the Church lets them know what they have, in the presence of God, and in the face of a whole congregation, most solemnly taken upon them; namely, that the child they engage for, shall 'renounce the devil and all his works,' bid defiance to Satan, and turn the deaf ear to all his temptations. As also to 'believe all the articles of the christian faith;' from which too many perfidiously revolt and apostatize. And lastly, to 'keep God's holy will and commandments, and to serve him truly all the days of their life.'

This is what they have publicly promised, and for which they become sureties and bondsmen to the Majesty of heaven; and if it be a great iniquity to prove false unto men, how much greater is it to falsify with our Maker! Not that these sureties can give the children grace, or force them to be virtuous, this is not in their power; but they may pray to God to give them his grace, and may direct them in the paths of virtue. They cannot indeed engage that the children they undertake for, shall actually renounce the devil and all his works, that they shall steadfastly

believe in God, and persevere in his ways all the days of their life, this is more than we can promise or perform for ourselves, and much less for any other: but that they will use their best endeavours, to bring and continue them in those ways; this is what is required, and may be justly expected from them. To which end, they are bid,—

Secondly, 'To remember that it is their part and duty to see that the infants (they promised for) be taught, as soon as they shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise and profession they have made by them.' None can keep a vow, till he is let to know what it is, and therefore sureties are to give children to understand, as soon as possible, what they have engaged for them, to encourage them to take it upon themselves, and to quicken them to perform it. He that is bound for another's debt, willingly seeks and desires to be released, and often calls upon the principal debtor to discharge it. So earnest should these undertakers be, to make their pupils sensible of their obligations to Almighty God, what favours he hath done for them, and what returns of duty they owe to him; teaching them the nature of the baptismal vow, and calling upon them to discharge it. For though they cannot infuse grace, they may instil instructions into them, and this will be best done by teaching and explaining to them the Church Catechism, in order to build them up in the christian faith; and that they may know these things the better, the sureties are,—

Thirdly, 'To call upon them to hear sermons;' and as soon as may be to bring them to the house of God, to be farther instructed in their duty, and excited to the performance of it; for 'faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,' publicly preached and inculcated upon them. Rom. x. 7. Sermons are intended to lead them on to a greater perfection, who have already imbibed the first principles of religion. They who frequent them are observed to edify in grace and good manners; whereas they who neglect them commonly forget their vow, and run into atheism and all manner of profaneness; which should make men 'swift to hear,' and ever ready to learn and receive the word of God, 'that is able to save their souls.' But because there is no building without a foundation, and sermons will do but little good, where the groundwork is not well laid by catechising, therefore the sureties are directed,—

Fourthly, To see them well instructed in the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments; which comprising all that we are to ask, believe, or do, contain the substance of all religion, or the whole of a Christian's duty. The Lord's Prayer will direct us to ask only things agreeable to the Divine will, and so may give us a well-grounded assurance of being heard. The Creed prescribes to our belief only the fundamental points necessary to our salvation, and so may help to keep us sound and steadfast in the faith. The Ten Commandments

teach us the whole of our duty, both to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and so serve to lead us in the way that we should go to attain everlasting life. And therefore these three excellent summaries of true religion, which for their brevity may be easily learned, ought for their great usefulness to be carefully taught by all that undertake the good education of children.

Fifthly, The sureties are here directed, to call upon the parents, that the infants they have promised for, may be brought up 'to lead a godly and christian life, to know, believe, and do all things necessary to their soul's health;' which is to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Without this, all other knowledge of worldly matters will be vain and useless; and with it, a slender measure of other knowledge, with a good mind, will be available to their salvation. And therefore it highly concerns these undertakers, as to discourage children by their admonitions and reproofs from doing evil; so by all good means to encourage them in well-doing. As also to admonish the parents, if they find them negligent in either of those ways. And where they see too great a backwardness,—

They are, Sixthly, To remember them of the great end of baptism; and to represent to them the profession solemnly made in it; which is, 'to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto him:' that is, to be not barely nominal, but real Christians; by doing as he did, and walking as he walked; imitating his death by dying unto sin, and his resurrection by rising again unto righteousness; 'continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living.' To bring these things to the better effect, the sureties are required,—

Lastly, 'To take care that the children they undertake for, be brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as they can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments in the vulgar tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.' At that time the baptized and instructed children are made solemnly to renew and ratify that vow in their own persons, which was before made by others in their behalf: for the better fulfilling whereof, they are assisted by the blessing and prayers of the bishop, to enable them to perform it.

Then, and not till then, are the sureties freed from that obligation, which should make them as forward and earnest for the doing hereof, as a surety is to be freed from another's debt, for which he stands engaged.

This is to 'bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.' Which, being a duty of so great importance, give me leave a little farther to exhort and encourage to it.

And, First, We have many precepts in holy Scripture that require this of us: God commanded the Israelites to 'teach their

children the God of their fathers, and the wonderful works he had done for them. How he made a covenant with Jacob, and gave Israel a law, which they were to teach their children, that their posterity might know it, and the children that were yet unborn, to the intent, that when they came up, they might shew their children the same. That they might put their trust in God, and not forget his works, but keep his commandments;' as you may read at large in the book of Exodus, and the 78th Psalm. Solomon enjoins the 'training up children in the way that they should go, that they might never depart from it.' Prov. xxii. 6. The first instructions sink deep, and leave lasting impressions behind them, which should teach us to instil good things betimes into them; that they may continue with them, and help them to 'grow in grace,' as they do in years, and from 'babes in Christ, may come to the fulness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus.'

To these precepts I might add many examples of holy men and women, who have taken great care of instructing their children, and bringing them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. 'I know (saith the God of Abraham) that he will command his children and household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Gen. xviii. 19. Holy David, in the midst of the great affairs of a kingdom, neglected not to instruct his son Solomon.' 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. And in the book of Psalms, we read of his calling 'young children to come and hearken unto him, that he might teach them the fear of the Lord.' Psal. xxxiv. 11. Moses commanded the 'children,' among the rest, to be 'brought into the congregation, to hear and learn the law, that they may fear God and serve him.' Deut. xxxi. 11, 12. In the New Testament, Christ commanded his disciples more especially to 'feed the lambs,' and to provide 'milk for babes,' even the 'sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.' John xxi. 15; 1 Pet. ii. 2. St. Paul commends Timothy, that 'from a child he had learnt and known the holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus.' 2 Tim. iii. 15. Josephus tells us, that the Jews were more than ordinarily careful, that their children might be instructed in the law; and that there was in every village a person called 'the instructor of babes,' to teach and educate them, of whom mention is made by St. Paul. Rom. ii. 20. And here,—

I cannot but commend a late laudable practice, that hath obtained among us, of erecting, endowing, and encouraging charity schools; whereby many poor children are maintained and instructed in the principles of religion, and thereby brought up and fitted for the service of God, and their country; to the great comfort of parents, and the greater benefit and support of the public welfare. Such pious and charitable works are praised and promoted by all that wish well to Zion, and pray for the peace

of Jerusalem; and are decried and discouraged by none, but the enemies and ill-willers to both.

Thus I have finished this excellent office of baptism, which being agreeable to the rules of the gospel, in its first institution, and likewise suited to the forms and models of antiquity, in its administration ever since, ought to be carefully observed and kept to by all the members of the established Church.

As for the twofold ministration of it that follows, the one in private houses, in cases of necessity; the other to persons of riper years, where it was omitted in infancy: they being in substance the same with public baptism, and differing only in the circumstances of time and place, will not need any farther explication.

The Church Catechism, which comes immediately after them, is elsewhere largely explained in all its parts; and therefore I shall proceed next to the office of Confirmation.

DISCOURSE CCXCVIII.

THE OFFICE OF CONFIRMATION.

ACTS viii. 14, 15, &c.—*When the apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

IN the close of the office of baptism lately treated of, the godfathers and godmothers, who present the infant to be baptized, are charged to see, that he be instructed and catechised, and brought up in the principles of the christian religion: and when he comes to a competent age and understanding of these things, to bring him to the bishop to be confirmed; which sacred rite being nearly allied to baptism, was anciently annexed to it, and was called the close and completion of baptism: for in the beginning of Christianity, when adult persons were received into the christian church, they were first instructed, and then baptized and confirmed together; and this practice still continues in the Greek church, which joins confirmation with baptism, in children as well as men; lest they should die without it. In the church of Rome, one quickly follows the other, thinking, none can be perfect Christians without both.

In our Church, where infants are initiated or received into the covenant, before they understand the nature or conditions of it, confirmation is deferred, till they come to years of discretion, and by catechising have attained to some competent knowledge of holy things; which is the wisest method that can be taken in so weighty an affair.

This is no late, novel, or needless invention, as some have vainly objected, but an ancient, pious, and apostolical institution,

tending much to the good education and salvation of baptized infants. It began in the Jewish church, where, as Buxtorf and other Jewish writers inform us, children, after they were circumcised, on the eighth day, as soon as they were capable of instruction, were to be taught the letter of the law, and then the Talmud; and when they arrived to some measure of understanding in both, they were publicly presented in the congregation; where they solemnly obliged themselves to be *filii præcepti*, subject to the law, to keep the Sabbath, the Passover, and other ceremonies of the Church; and from thenceforward were to answer for themselves.

This laudable practice was, from the Jewish, derived into the christian church, where it was approved by our Saviour, and practised by the apostles, in all places where they went, and is, through the several ages and centuries of the Church, come down and continued with us to this day.

The church of Rome hath indeed advanced this rite of confirmation into a sacrament, and so some of the ancient fathers represent it; St. Cyprian and St. Austin expressly calling it by that name: but though wanting a necessary requisite, viz. its being 'instituted and ordained by Christ himself,' it may not, in a proper or strict sense, be reckoned a sacrament; yet being a sacred ordinance appointed by the apostles, and attended with prayers and blessings, it may in a large sense be styled by that name. For which reason our Church hath appointed a short peculiar office for the more solemn celebration thereof. The preface of which begins thus:—

'To the end that confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of them that receive it,' &c., where the Church proceeds by that excellent rule or precept of the apostle, 'Let all things in the church be done to edification, or for the use of edifying.' 1 Cor. xiv. 26. That is, for the greater benefit and comfort of them to whom it is administered; to which end the Church hath thought good to order,—

'That none hereafter shall be confirmed, but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer to such other questions as in the short catechism are contained;' for it cannot be conceived how any should be edified by that of which he hath no understanding, Ignorance being oftener found the mother of Error than Devotion. And therefore our Church stays the performing of this office till children come to the years of discretion, and have attained to some knowledge of what hath been done and is farther doing for them.

This order is therefore thought very convenient to be observed, to the end 'That children having learned what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in baptism, they may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm the same; and also promise that, by the grace of God, they will evermore endeavour themselves faithfully to

observe such things as they by their own confession have assented to.'

But, for the better clearing and understanding of these things, it will be requisite, First, to consider the nature and end of confirmation; what is intended by, and included in it. 2dly, The persons who are to administer it. 3dly, The persons to whom it is to be administered, with the manner of its ministration. And lastly, The benefits and blessings said to be conveyed by it. Of all which I shall speak something from the words of the text: 'When the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, and they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.' Where we read, that when Philip the deacon had baptized many new converts in Samaria, and had gone so far with them as his office of a deacon could empower him, Peter and John were sent down to pray over and to confirm them: which will lead me to inquire,—

First, Into the nature and end of confirmation, to shew what is intended by it. And here from what hath been said, confirmation may be defined to be, the renewing and ratifying in our own persons the vow and promise made in our behalf by our sureties in baptism, or the taking that upon ourselves in riper years which was by others undertaken for us in our infancy, accompanied with the blessing and prayers of the bishop, for grace and spiritual aid and assistance to perform it.

The things promised and engaged in our name and behalf were, the renouncing all our ghostly enemies, 'the devil, the world, and the flesh; the believing all the articles of the christian faith, and the keeping of God's holy will and commandments, and walking in the same all the days of our life;' the conditions of the covenant by which we were admitted into it, which things were vowed and promised for us, when we were incapable of doing it for ourselves,—an act of great favour and kindness in our undertakers, especially since by their engagements we were received into Christ's family, made members of his mystical body the Church, the children of God, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom: which inestimable privileges are conferred upon us by the foresaid promises of sureties in our behalf; which being so much for our great good and benefit, it behoves us to take upon us the obligation of those promises as soon as possible, and to endeavour to our utmost to make them good; the ratifying and confirming of which is what is here meant by confirmation; especially when attended with blessings, prayers, and laying on of hands, to make them effectual. And this will lead me to consider,—

Secondly, The persons who are to administer this rite of confirmation; and they, from the beginning, have been the prime pastors and governors of the Church. Among the Jews (as Buxtorf tells us), they who in their younger years had learned

the law were brought into the holy assembly, and had prayers made over them, with the imposition of the hands of the high priest; that office being performed by the highest order of priests under that dispensation.

In the New Testament we find confirmation confined to the apostles, who were an order of Christ's appointment, distinct from and superior to the seventy disciples, and could do some things with authority in the Church, which the others could not. Hence we find here, 'that when Samaria had received the word of God,' and many of them were baptized by Philip; Peter and John, two of the apostles, were sent to administer confirmation to them; which was an act peculiar to the chief rulers of the Church, and not allowed to be executed by any inferior officers: for though Philip could baptize, yet he could not confirm; yea, though he had many miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet that did not qualify him for this office, which belonged wholly to the apostles. In compliance with this apostolic pattern and practice, the christian church hath ever reserved the honour of dispensing this holy rite to their successors the bishops, who have every where executed it ever since, as we find attested by the fathers, with one consent, through every century. St. Ambrose tells us, that 'to preserve the unity and authority of the Church, *confirmatio a solis episcopis fieri solet*,'—confirmation is wont only to be performed by the bishops. To the same purpose speaks St. Jerome: '*Non nisi per manus episcopi*,' *&c.*,—by the hands of the bishops only was confirmation administered. This was a matter of fact so well known, and attested through all the ages of the Church, that Calvin himself plainly declares it to be an ancient practice, that children of christian parents being first taught, *coram episcopo sisterentur*,—should be brought to the bishop to be confirmed: and other of the wisest presbyterians, overcome by the evidence of truth, have frankly acknowledged the same, by all which it manifestly appears, that this office of confirmation hath been ever assigned to the bishops, as the prime rulers of the Church, even as it continues with us to this day. And with good reason too, their blessing being apt to be received with greater veneration; to beget a higher value for their authority and order, and to raise the esteem of this sacred rite; as also to make the people expect better effects from that holy office, which none but the highest ministers of religion are empowered to perform.

Thus we see the persons authorized to administer this sacred ordinance. Next, we are to consider the persons to whom it is to be administered; and they are are all baptized persons, competently instructed in the principles of the christian religion. So that the two qualifications for confirmation are baptism and competent instruction in the Church Catechism, or the first principles of religion. For,—

First, none are capable of the benefit of confirmation but

such as have been before baptized; for persons must first be received into the Church before they can receive the blessings promised and conferred in it. And therefore these Samaritan converts were first taught and baptized by Philip the deacon, before they were confirmed by Peter and John the apostles. In like manner, the disciples at Ephesus were baptized 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' before St. Paul laid his hands on them to bless or confirm them, as we read, Acts xix. 5, 6. And our Church, by the warrant of these and other examples, acts accordingly.

And as baptism, so 2dly, catechising and instruction is necessary to confirmation, and must ever go before it; for without that, children can neither know what hath been promised and engaged for them; nor take upon themselves the obligation of them. It is, indeed, through the tender mercy of God, and the charity of the Church, that infants are received into the covenant by the engagements of others, before they know any thing of the nature, ends, or conditions of it; which makes it necessary to teach them, as soon as they are able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession hath been made by sureties in their behalf, that they may be fitted to renew and ratify those promises made in their name, and to take upon themselves, in their own persons, the obligation of them; that they may be enabled to know and do what, when they come to age, they stand bound to perform.

But what is the time or age appointed for the confirming such as have been baptized? Why, that hath varied according to the different customs of countries, and according to the different capacities and proficiency of those that are to receive confirmation. In adult persons, who were able to speak for themselves, in old times, confirmation immediately followed baptism, and were both performed together: but in infants some time was allowed after baptism for instruction before they received this rite. Some have thought fit to administer it at five years of age; others have required seven; and others again between seven and twelve: but our Church hath fixed no set time, but only requires that it be done to persons come to years of discretion, and can give some good account of the Church Catechism; and because that may be done by some sooner, and by others later, there is no certain time appointed for all, but is left to the bishop to appoint the seasons as he shall judge fit.

From the persons to whom confirmation is to be administered, I should proceed to the manner of the bishop's administering it, together with the benefits and blessings conferred and conveyed by it, which shall be the subject of the next.

DISCOURSE CCXCIX.

THE BISHOP LAYING ON HIS HAND.

ACTS viii. 16, 17. — *They prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.*

I SHEWED in my last the nature and design of confirmation, which consist in the renewing and confirming of the baptismal vow, together with the persons who are to administer this sacred rite; and they are, the bishops, as the chief pastors and governors of the Church; as also the persons to whom it is to be administered, and they are, children baptized, and grown up to years of discretion, able to say the Catechism, and in some measure to understand the principles of the christian religion.

I proceed in this, to shew the manner of its ministration; or what is done by the bishop in performing of this office, together with the benefits and blessing conferred by it, and that is, the Holy Ghost.

For the manner of its ministration, that is in this office shewed to be,—

First, By interrogating the persons to be confirmed, concerning their resolution of fulfilling the baptismal vow.

Secondly, By the bishop's praying over them, that they may receive the Holy Ghost.

Thirdly, By his laying his hands on them, in order to their receiving it; which things contain the whole of this office, and must be briefly handled.

For the First, Upon the day appointed, all that are then to be confirmed, being placed and standing in order before the bishop; after the preface before treated of, the bishop shall say unto them,—

'Do ye here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same in your own persons; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe, and to do all those things, which your godfathers and godmothers then undertook for you?' To which every one is to answer, with an audible voice, 'I do.' This way of instilling things, by questions and answers, hath been ever thought the most easy and most useful method of instruction; because, being known beforehand, they give time to weigh and consider, and so are apt to make the best way to the understanding, and to leave more lasting impressions upon the mind, than long and continued orations without them. And therefore preachers in old times, when this method was frequently used, were called by the name of catechists, and their auditors by the name of catechumens; such were Origen, Pantænus, and many other of the ancient fathers: and the church of Alexandria, wherein these most abounded, was

styled the school of Alexandria; and were this way of catechising more practised among us, we should, in all probability, find better fruits and effects of our teaching than now we do.

But to go on, the bishop having gained their assent in the affirmative, to what he asked of them, viz. that they do actually take that upon themselves, which their sureties undertook for them, he proceeds farther to instruct them, how they may be best enabled to perform it; and because they cannot do these things of themselves, he, by the Church's direction, lets them know from some places of holy Scripture, where all their strength lies, and to whom all their praises for it are due; to which the whole congregation, by some short responses, give their consent. And the first of these places is taken out of Psal. cxxiv. 7, 'Our help standeth in the name of the Lord;' to which the people answer, 'Who hath made the heaven and earth.' Where we are admonished, not to rely upon our own strength, which is no better than weakness; but to seek it somewhere else, namely, from God, who hath all power in heaven and earth, of which we may be well assured, because his hands made and created both.

The second place is taken out of Psal. cxiii. 2, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord;' to which the people reply, 'From henceforth, world without end.' The former directed us where to go for help and ability to keep and perform our vow; this teaches us to whom all our thanks and praise are to be returned; and that is to the same in both, viz. to God, 'who alone can work in us, both to will and to do of his own good will and pleasure.'

The third place is taken out of Psal. cii. 1, 'Lord, hear our prayers;' to which the people answer and say, 'And let our cry come unto thee.' These are petitions for audience and success in this, and all our other prayers, which we may the rather hope for, because this is the way and means prescribed by God himself, for the obtaining of all his blessings: 'Call upon me, (saith he,) and I will hear you, and you shall praise me.'

When the bishop hath thus interrogated the persons to be confirmed, about the baptismal vow, and directed them how they may be assisted and enabled to make it good; he then, by the example of Peter and John in the text, proceeds to 'pray for them, that they may receive the Holy Ghost;' which he does in the following collect, appointed by the Church for that purpose, saying, 'Almighty and everlasting God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these thy servants, by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given them forgiveness of all their sins;' where the Church puts them in mind of the two great privileges, graciously bestowed in baptism, viz. regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost, and the remission of sins; and then 'beseeches the Lord to strengthen them with the Holy Ghost the Comforter, and daily to increase in them his manifold gifts of grace,' reckoning up the 'spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness, and to fill

them with the spirit of his holy fear, now and for ever.' This is by the fathers called the sevenfold grace of the Holy Ghost, which is begun in baptism, by cleansing the soul from the pollution of sin; and is farther advanced in confirmation, by adorning it with the graces of the Holy Spirit: by the one we are washed from our original corruption in the laver of regeneration; by the other we are consecrated to be fit temples of the Holy Ghost. And therefore our Church here acknowledges the grace of God, vouchsafed in the former, and begs greater measures of it, to qualify us for the latter.

When the bishop hath thus prayed for them, then all that are to be confirmed, kneeling in order before him, he lays his hand upon the head of every one severally, saying over them this benediction, 'Defend, O Lord, this thy child (or servant) with thy heavenly grace, that he may continue thine for ever; and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.'

Laying on of hands is one of the most ancient ceremonies used in blessing; it was used by Jacob in blessing his sons, Gen. xlviii. 14, 15; where we find him 'laying his hand on Ephraim, Manasseh, and Joseph;' and with that, imploring a blessing upon them. From this example, it was after followed and observed by the Jews in all their solemn benedictions. Thus we find it used in consecrating the Levites, whom Aaron, after laying on of his hands, 'offered unto the Lord.' Numb. viii. 10, 11. Moreover, God directed Moses in blessing Joshua, to 'lay his hand upon his head,' and thereby make him his successor. Numb. xxvii. 18. In the New Testament, we find this custom derived to the christian church; for we read of our blessed Saviour himself, that in compliance with this ancient usage, 'he laid on his hands, and blessed the children that were brought unto him.' Mark x. 16. Peter and John, in the text, laid on their hands, and blessed the Samaritan converts: and the apostles and fathers have, by imposition of hands and prayer, confirmed disciples, and ordained elders ever since; for which reason the author to the Hebrews reckons this 'laying on of hands,' among the 'fundamental doctrines of Christianity.' Chap. vi. 1, 2.

But what are the benefits and blessings conveyed by it? Why, that our text tells us, is 'the receiving the Holy Ghost,' with the gifts and graces thereof; 'then laid they their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.' And the same is affirmed of the disciples of Ephesus, of whom we read, that when St. Paul 'laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied,' Acts xix. 6; to which he refers in his Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. i. 13, 'In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise:' and, chap. iv. 30, they were said to be 'sealed, by this Holy Spirit, unto the day of redemption.'

In after-times, St. Ambrose tells us, '*Ad invocationem episcopi*

Spiritus Sanctus infunditur;' at the invocation of the bishop the Spirit is infused. And nothing is more frequently or firmly asserted by all the fathers, than the Holy Ghost's being conferred in baptism, confirmation, and ordination, for the more comfortable and beneficial performance of those divine rights.

Now, these gifts of the Holy Ghost are either extraordinary and miraculous, as the gift of tongues, of miracles, prophecy, healing, and the like; which were given to the apostles, and others, in the beginning of Christianity, for the planting and propagating of the gospel, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, chap. ii. 19, and elsewhere; or common and ordinary, as the acquired knowledge of the tongues, the improvements in learning, skill in the arts and sciences, and the like; which come from the same Spirit, though not in the same extraordinary way: the former by sudden infusion, the latter by the methods of study and diligence; and though the former ceased upon the spreading of the gospel everywhere, with the reason of them; yet the latter, being of standing use in the Church, are to continue to the world's end: for which purpose the Holy Spirit is promised to 'abide with us for ever,' to 'lead us into all truth' necessary to salvation, and in the use of good means to 'keep us steadfast in the same.' The bishop thus laying his hand upon them, after the example of the apostles, in his benediction prays particularly for each of them.

First, 'To defend them with his heavenly grace;' that is, to guard them by his Holy Spirit, against all the wiles and temptations of their ghostly enemies. Here, as the fathers observe of St. Paul, that 'he was not so bold as to communicate the Spirit to his converts by his own authority, but begs it of God for them,' Col. i. 9; so neither doth the bishop pretend to give the Holy Ghost of himself, but by way of supplication asks it of God, as his steward, to convey it to others. And they may reasonably hope, that while his minister's hand is upon their heads, God is stretching out his hand to save and defend them: so that neither the assaults of the devil, nor the allurements of the world, nor the enticements of the flesh, shall do them any harm, or 'pluck them out of his hand.' To which end he prays,—

Secondly, That the persons confirmed 'may continue his for ever:' having given up themselves to be his servants, it is to be wished, that they may never leave or lose so good a Master, but continue still in his favour and service, and be 'kept by his Holy Spirit through faith unto salvation.' To effect which, it is farther begged,—

Thirdly, That they may 'daily increase in God's Holy Spirit more and more, until they come to his everlasting kingdom.' That they be still 'adding one virtue to another; to our faith, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness,

charity:' and not to rest in any lower measures or degrees of these, but to be still improving and growing in grace, till it ripen and be perfected in glory.

After this follows the Lord's Prayer, which being prescribed in all the other offices of the Church, may not be omitted in this; and being explained in sundry of them, will here need no farther explication.

This pious office concludes with two excellent collects in the behalf of the persons confirmed, relating to their duty, and the encouragements annexed to it.

The first whereof begins with the usual titles and attributes of 'Almighty and everlasting God,' together with his peculiar property of 'making us both to will and to do those things that are good and acceptable to his divine Majesty.' 'Without me' (saith our Saviour), ye can do nothing;' but with my assistance ye may do many good, holy, and acceptable things; and particularly, 'ye may bring forth much fruit, that may redound to the glory of God, and your own salvation.' It is 'in him that we live, move, and have our being;' and 'he it is that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.' Phil. ii. 13. From a due sense of these things, the bishop 'makes his humble supplications unto God for these his servants, upon whom, by the example of his holy apostles, he hath now laid his hands;' that it may not prove an empty, insignificant sign, but a token 'to certify them of his gracious favour and great goodness towards them.' Praying that 'God's fatherly hand may be ever over them,' when his is removed: 'and that his Holy Spirit may be ever with them, to lead them into the knowledge and obedience of his word; that in the end they may obtain everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord,' &c.

The next and last prayer, with the blessing, are explained in the close of the Communion Service, to which, to avoid repetition, I refer the reader.

Thus I have finished this short but excellent office of confirmation, together with the acts, duties, and privileges appertaining to it.

And now what remains, but that we set a high price and value upon this pious and primitive rite, by which we receive the Holy Ghost, to all the ends and purposes of religion. Let none run to it merely for company, or for fashion's sake; but reverently observe it, as a means of grace, and a step to glory. Let it not be neglected, either by those that are to give, or those that are to receive it; but let the former be ready duly to administer it, and the other carefully to attend or be brought to it; considering how much it tends to the advancing of knowledge, and promoting of piety in the world. Let all parents, who tender the welfare of their children, take care, by catechising and instructing of them, to fit and prepare them for this office, and be as mindful of the good of their souls, as they wont to be of their bodies.

Let all sureties and undertakers for children, who stand bound to see them instructed in the principles of religion, and brought to confirmation, take care that this be effectually done; to release themselves of the obligation, which else will lie heavy upon them, and swell their accounts, by the violation of such solemn engagements. In a word,—

Let us all endeavour to preserve this ancient, pious and laudable practice, and to answer the end, that we may receive the benefit of it; and because none may be admitted to the Holy Communion but such as are confirmed, or ready and desirous to be so; let us not omit this sacred rite, that we may be fitted to receive the holy sacrament, and to enjoy the fellowship of good Christians here on earth, the better to be prepared for the communion of saints hereafter in heaven.

DISCOURSE CCC.

THE OFFICE OF MATRIMONY.

HEB. xiii. 4.—*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.*

AFTER baptism, catechising, and confirmation, before treated of, whereby youth is 'trained up in the way that they should go ever after,' there commonly follows in some time a settlement in marriage, whereby two persons, male and female, are joined together during life, in an inseparable state, for the mutual help and comfort of each other; which being a divine ordinance, of great and lasting importance, and that upon which the welfare and happiness of their whole lives depend, the Church hath prepared an office, for the better celebrating the rites, and observing the rules and obligations of it, which comes next to be considered.

And for the better solemnizing hereof, the Church hath ordered, that the banns of matrimony be thrice published, some time before, in the congregations, to prevent the inconveniences of disorderly and clandestine marriages, which occasion many times great grief to parents, and great misery to the parties; and therefore the better to provide against both, it is ordered, that if the parties live in two different parishes, the publication of the banns be made in both, and that due notice be given by a certificate thereof, that no false or secret measures or methods may be taken herein. This is an ancient custom said to be derived from the Jews, and is observed by them to this day, from whence it came into the christian church, and still continues with us, and the reformed churches everywhere abroad.

But to come to the office; it begins with the kind and endearing compellation of 'Dearly beloved,' a salutation often used by the apostles in their epistles on sundry occasions, and is very fitly applied to this loving and sacred solemnity. After which is

declared the end and design of the present meeting, in these words: 'We are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony;' where to prevent all levity and rudeness of behaviour, which too commonly attends this solemnity, the people are minded of the presence of God, that 'they are in his sight,' as well as in the face of a whole congregation; and therefore must avoid all light and indecent carriage, and demean themselves with that reverence and gravity that becomes so sacred an ordinance, which being here said to be an honourable state, from the nature, ends, and institution of it, I shall treat of it from these words of the apostle, 'Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' From which words I shall take occasion to speak,—

First, Of the honourable and undefiled state of matrimony. And,—

Secondly, Of the danger of breaking the pales of it by whoredom, or adultery.

And first of the honourable and undefiled state of matrimony. This is expressly asserted in the text, saying, 'Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled. The honour whereof is here set forth by the Church in sundry particulars; as,—

First, from the divine institution of it, for it is said to be 'instituted of God,' from whom nothing but what is holy and honourable can proceed. 'God saw that it was not good for man to be alone,' and therefore 'made a help-meet for him,' joining them together for their mutual society and assistance. Gen. ii. 18, 19, &c. And to add to the honour of this ordinance,— Secondly, The time of its institution is here mentioned, and that was in the time of man's innocency; before he fell, or apostatized from his Maker, and so was not ordained merely as a help or relief in his lapsed and forlorn condition, but to complete his happiness in his pure and perfect state. It was God Almighty that made a wife for Adam in paradise, and gave her to him, as a gift worthy of the Giver, and suited to the condition of the receiver in his highest perfection; so that if we have any regard for our Maker, we stand engaged to reverence his institution, and esteem that to be honourable which he by his own authority hath made so.

Again, Thirdly, Marriage is here said to be honourable, from the signification it hath to the 'mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church;' being an emblem or representation of that entire affection and near conjunction into which Christ hath received his Church, which he hath espoused and made one with himself; from whence the apostle styles it 'a great mystery,' to represent the great love that Christ bears to his Church, 'who gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, and thereby present it a glorious

church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.' Ephes. v. 26, 27. From matrimony's being thus a symbol and signification of the highest mystery, the church of Rome hath advanced it to the honour of a sacrament; but though herein they have carried the matter too high, it being nowhere appointed as 'a means of conferring grace, or a pledge to assure us thereof,' the two main requisites of a sacrament, yet it may be well enough reckoned in the number of sacred things, being instituted by God himself for the good of mankind, and accompanied with many sacred vows and promises to that purpose, which makes no small addition to the honour and holiness of it.

Moreover, Fourthly, The honour of matrimony is here set forth by Christ's 'adorning and beautifying it with his presence, and the first miracle that he wrought in Cana of Galilee;' of which we read in the second chapter of St. John, where we find our blessed Saviour present at a wedding, and vouchsafing to be a guest at the marriage-feast, 'the mother of Jesus being there also;' at which feast he wrought his first miracle, by turning water into wine, to supply the defect, and to promote the mirth and cheerfulness of the company upon that occasion. We are wont to account an action or assembly to be highly graced and favoured if a prince or a great man vouchsafe to honour it with his presence; how greatly then was matrimony honoured when the Son of God himself was pleased to be present at it, at once to approve and adorn the solemnity! Furthermore,—

'Marriage is' said to be 'honourable in all,' poor as well as rich, noble and ignoble, high and low, one with another: for since God hath planted in all the same desires and inclinations to one another, he hath allowed them all the same honest and honourable way of gratifying them, and hath ordained marriage indifferently for them all to that end. So that we may neither despise it, nor deny it to any that regularly come to it: for if marriage be so honourable a state as we have seen, we should take care not to vilify or disparage it, as the manner of some is. We read of some heretics of old who called 'matrimony a pollution,' perverting that saying of the apostle, 'They that are in the flesh cannot please God;' and so made a distinction between the married and unmarried clergy, refusing to receive the sacrament at the hands of those that had wives. But these were branded for heretics by the catholic church, and pronounced accursed by the council of Gangra. Ignatius declares, that 'they have the old serpent dwelling in them, who say of matrimony that it is a pollution;' for the apostle here expressly tells us, that 'the marriage-bed is undefiled;' and that there is no pollution in the chaste embraces of lawful wedlock. Hence we find that the heathens, and all civilized countries, have ever honoured marriage; and none but the loose and profligate part of mankind vilify or revile it, and that merely to let loose the reins to their unbridled lusts, and

to ‘ commit all uncleanness with greediness,’ the danger whereof we shall see after.

And as we may not decry or despise marriage, so neither may we deny it to any that duly seek and have recourse to it. And here the church of Rome cannot be excused, who condemn marriage in the clergy, which God not only allows, but hath made honourable among all men, clergy as well as laity: and at the same time connive at fornication, which he hath severely condemned and threatened with damnation; which is to leave the pure undefiled way of God's commandments, for the impure and impious ways of ‘ seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;’ among which ‘ the forbidding to marry’ is expressly mentioned in 1 Tim. iv. 1—3. And this is the more inexcusable in that church, because St. Peter, from whom they derive their supremacy, was himself a married man; and St. Paul declares that ‘ he had power to lead about a sister or wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas,’ 1 Cor. ix. 5; for being ‘ men of like passions and inclinations with others,’ there can be no reason for denying them the same lawful way and means of gratifying them.

From all which, the Church, for the farther honour of matrimony, infers the right way and manner of entering upon, and engaging in it, which is here described, First negatively, in these words; ‘ And therefore is not by any to be enterprised, or taken in hand unadvisedly, lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding.’ And Secondly positively, in those that follow; ‘ But reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.’ For the negative part we are directed,—

First, Not to enter into this state ‘ unadvisedly;’ that is, without the advice of parents and friends; for this being an affair of great weight and consequence, wherein the being and well-being of the whole life is concerned, should not be taken in hand without the most serious consideration and advice: that which can be done but once (as a wise man hath observed) had need to be done well at first, there being no altering or amending of it after. They that enter into wedlock, enter into an irrevocable bond, which nothing but death can cancel; and being so, they have need to consider and advise well beforehand, lest being hurried on by a blind affection, they find their error and repent of it, when it is too late to retract it. Much less is this to be done ‘ lightly, or wantonly, to satisfy men's carnal lusts and appetites, like brute beasts that have no understanding:’ for matrimony being a sacred and religious action, attended with prayers, and consecrated with blessings and praises, ought not to be polluted or prostituted by vile and sinful lusts; nor serve, by too great freedoms, to heighten and increase those flames, which it was designed to quench.

Having seen the negative part, how this ordinance is not to be

entered upon; the Church next directs in the affirmative, how it is to be undertaken, and that is, 'reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.'

To do it 'reverently,' is with a due regard to the holiness of the ordinance, not staining it by any unchaste or sinful embraces; but 'possessing our vessels in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, as the heathens that know not God.'

To do it 'discreetly,' is by thoroughly weighing the duties belonging to that state, and resolving upon a faithful discharge of them.

To do it 'advisedly,' is to hearken to the counsel and advice of friends and relations, who wish well and are able to direct in this affair.

To do it 'soberly,' is to keep within the bounds of modesty and moderation, by observing the rules of chastity and fidelity, without giving way to any indecent or inordinate desires.

To do it 'in the fear of God,' is to begin this new course of life with prayers for a blessing upon, and assistance in it, that both parties may live together to the glory of God, the comfort of their friends, and the salvation of their own souls.

Lastly, To preserve the honour of marriage, and rightly perform the duties of it, the Church here directs to a 'due consideration of' the ends or causes for which matrimony was ordained; of which the three principal are here particularly mentioned, as,—

First, 'It was ordained for the procreation of children, to be brought up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.' This seems to be the chief aim and intention of God Almighty in the first institution of marriage, and therefore ought to be chiefly minded by all that enter into that state; for having in the creation made mankind 'male and female, he blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,' Gen. i. 27, 28; where he seems by coupling these together, to make it a means of peopling and propagating the world; and many have thought, that they who make not this the principal design of their joining together, do but pervert and profane this holy ordinance; but of this more hereafter.

Secondly, 'Matrimony was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication, that such as have not the gift of continency might marry, and keep themselves undefiled members of Christ's body;' this is expressly asserted by St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 2: 'Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband;' and ver. 9: 'If they cannot contain, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.' Where the apostle plainly supposes, that every one hath not this gift of continency, for whom God having appointed an innocent and honourable way of gratifying those natural desires, and extinguishing all impure flames, there can be no just pretence or excuse for too much indulging or continuing in them;

although Bellarmine, and some other Romish casuists, have determined this matter quite contrary to the apostle, by saying, that 'Marrying and burning are both bad things, but the worst of the two is marrying;' by which impious doctrines, fornication, and all uncleanness, which the apostle would not have so much as named among Christians, most shamefully abound and increase among them; the guilt whereof will lie heavy at their door, who deny or decry the remedy, appointed by God against them.

Thirdly, Matrimony was ordained for the mutual society, help and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity. This is the last, though none of the least ends of this institution: for God knowing it 'not to be good for man to be alone,' made a partner and companion for him, to help and share with him in all conditions, which doubles the joys of prosperity, and lessens the sorrows of adversity. Solomon tells us, that 'Two are better than one, for if the one falleth the other can lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone, when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up.' Eccles. iv. 9, 10. Solitude exposes to many and great hazards, against which God hath therefore provided a remedy, by making man a sociable creature, and inclining him to society; but of all societies, there is none so near and dear as that of marriage, which joins persons together in the nearest and closest union, their interests and concerns are bound up together, and the one cannot be easy or happy without the other. By this near conjunction, two heads, hands, and hearts are inseparably linked and tied together, for the mutual help, comfort, and support of each other, which must render matrimony highly valuable and beneficial to us; and we are infinitely beholden to the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, in contriving and appointing this excellent expedient, for the good and welfare of mankind.

Thus we see something of the honour of marriage, from the holiness, comfort, and benefit of its institution, together with the great and noble ends for which it was ordained: all which the minister is ordered to apply to the present occasion in the following words, viz. 'Into which holy estate these two persons present come now to be joined:' where they are minded of the piety and purity of that state, into which they are now entering, to preserve the honour of wedlock, and to keep the bed undefiled, that they may come and live chastely together ever after; to which end, our text, to the honour of marriage, subjoins,—

Secondly, The danger and disgrace of whoredom and adultery, saying, 'But whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' They who give themselves a loose in those matters, will be called to a strict account, at the day of reckoning, and receive the heavy sentence pronounced against the violation of this sacred bond; for God will judge and execute sentence on all those who 'defile themselves with strange flesh.' The expression is much like that

ironical saying of Solomon; 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes, but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.' Eccles. xi. 9. All such unlawful pleasures have a sting in the tail, that embitters all their sweetness; and turns their delight into misery and torment; for God punishes the lewdness and incontinence of such persons partly in this life, but chiefly in the next.

In this life he commonly pursues whoremongers and adulterers with anguish and regret in their minds, with infamy and disgrace in their names, with painful diseases in their bodies, and with rottenness in their bones: which made the apostle say, that 'all other sins are without the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body;' yea, against the body of Christ too, who hath made us members of his own mystical body, the Church; and then asks the question, 'Shall I take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot?' which he answers with abhorrence, saying, 'God forbid! Know ye not (as he goes on) that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and he that defileth the temple of God, him will God destroy? 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19; which leads to the punishment of these sins

In the next life, where these impure flames will kindle the unquenchable fire of God's wrath; and men's burning in lusts one to another, will consign them over to everlasting burnings; which is sufficient to shew both the honour of marriage, and the danger of violating this holy covenant.

DISCOURSE CCCI.

THE CHARGE GIVEN IN MATRIMONY.

1 Cor. vii. 39, last part.—*She is at liberty to marry whom she please, only in the Lord.*

After the introduction, setting forth the honour and ends of matrimony, there follows a charge to be given to, and in the behalf of the persons entering into that holy state, to remove all impediments, and to clear the way to the more decent and innocent celebration of it; and of this I shall treat from these words of the apostle: 'She is at liberty to marry whom she please, only in the Lord.' Where the liberty of marriage is restrained only to lawful and regular matches, and such as 'are in the Lord,' that is, as it is generally expounded, in the fear of the Lord, and in obedience to his commandments; and so forbids all marriages made and carried on contrary thereunto. Or, as others expound it, in the faith of the Lord Christ, the head of the Church; and so prohibits all being 'unequally yoked with infidels and unbelievers.' Others again expound it, of the Church of the Lord; and so forbids all secret and clandestine marriages, which they make no better than 'chambering and wantonness.' Lastly,

others interpret this phrase of ' only in the Lord,' of that purity and chastity that becomes the people of the Lord; and so forbids all libidinous or lustful marriages, made only to gratify carnal appetite, where love soon expires, and ends in loathing and dislike; and therefore requires it to be founded on more pure and pious motives, and directed to wiser and better ends.

That the persons to be joined may be thus qualified, here is a double charge given in the solemnizing of the nuptials. The one more general, to the whole congregation there present; the other more particular, to the persons that come there to be joined.

The general charge to the whole congregation is made in these words; ' Therefore if any man can shew any just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak, or hereafter for ever hold his peace.' That all things may be rightly done in this important affair, and to prevent all illegal and impure mixtures in this holy ordinance, all persons present are called upon to put in any just exceptions (if they know any) against the completing and consummating of it. This is an ancient practice, which hath been ever thought necessary or expedient at the celebrating of this office. We read of Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury, that at the marriage of king Henry I. he declared in God's name, ' That if any knew any just impediment to that marriage, let him come forth, and he should be heard freely.' Such public inquiry hath been usually made into any impediment that may be alleged in this case, where if any be alleged, either before, or at the time of celebrating the nuptials, the matter must be respited, and fairly examined before this sacred rite can be fully performed, that it may not be stained or polluted by any evil or undue proceedings in it.

Accordingly our Church orders this inquiry or proclamation to be made to that end, and the congregation are bound in honour and conscience, if they know of any just impediment, to speak out and reveal it; otherwise the guilt of an unlawful marriage will in a great measure lie upon them, who might have hindered it, but would not. For he that counsels or conceals an enormity, which he may and ought to publish and prevent, contracts the guilt of it upon himself; and by his silence and consent makes him partaker of others' sins: no fear, favour, or flattery should make them hold their peace, when they are called upon to speak on so great and necessary an occasion.

And this is to be done too in the proper time, before the parties are joined together, otherwise it will be too late when the knot is tied, which nothing but death can untie; for then they are to seal up their lips, and for ever hold their peace from any such discoveries. But beside this general charge, given to the whole congregation, here is,—

Secondly, A more particular charge given to the parties that come to be joined; and that is in these words to be spoken by the minister: ' I require and charge you both (as ye will answer

at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed), that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it.' Where the minister solemnly adjures them both to publish the integrity of their intentions, and to declare, in the presence of God and the congregation, their freedom from all obligations to any other.

This all wise nations have thought necessary to preserve the peace and purity of this ordinance, neither of which can be well secured without it: and therefore our Church here lays a very strict charge on both parties, not to conceal any thing that may stain the honour of their marriage, or render it unlawful to them. The manner of the charge is authoritative and judicial, the priest saying, 'I require and charge you both,' &c., thereby enjoining them in God's name to speak the truth, and to hide nothing from him, who is privy to all our ways. And because something that may hinder may be known only to themselves, and no earthly powers can force a confession from them, we adjure and urge them to it by the just and dreadful judgment of God, who knows the hearts of all men, and will one day disclose the secrets of them to all the world. And it is much better to set matters right and open here, than to leave them to the disclosing and decision of the last day.

The matter of the charge, which is mainly to be considered, is weighty and worthy of observation; and that is, to reveal the impediments of marriage, and remove all the rubs that may lie in its way; that the entrance upon it may be safe and easy, the farther progress in it pleasant and delightsome, and the end happy. To which purpose,—

The great question is, What are those impediments that may justly hinder marriage, and render it unlawful? And here to pass by those of age, impotency, frigidity, and barrenness, the common pleas for lewdness and incontinence, which things may indeed discourage, but may not always deter from marriage; for there being other good ends of it, beside that of procreation, viz. the mutual help, comfort, and society that the one ought to have of the other, they may not be denied or debarred from coming together for those ends; for many aged and agreeable persons have lived more happily, and passed their time with greater content and quietness, than many younger couples in that state.

I say, to pass by these, our Church acquaints us with the four grand impediments usually mentioned and insisted upon in this case; which because they defile marriage, and make it sinful, are to be discovered, and, if possible, prevented too, beforehand. And they are: First, a preceding marriage. Secondly, a pre-contract with another. Thirdly, nearness of kin, by blood or otherwise. And, Fourthly, want of consent of parents or guardians, in case of minority. All which are to be timely considered and provided against. And here—

The first and great impediment is, a preceding marriage. There is a gross enormity too often found among some men, to have more wives than one, in different places; who, though already joined, yet in their vain rambles in the world, to satisfy their lusts, or for other base ends, take another, to the great injury of the first consort, and to the unspeakable infamy and misery of both. This is a crying sin, and an abomination to be abhorred among all Christians, being directly contrary to the first institution of marriage, and all the other ends and duties of that holy state; as is more fully shewn in the Catechism, upon the seventh commandment, to which I refer the reader.

This, therefore, is a fit matter of inquiry, to be urged upon all, especially strangers, who present themselves to this sacred ordinance, and is a just reason for excluding all such from it, as are either conscious of it to themselves, or convicted of it by others.

Secondly, Another just hinderance of marriage is a pre-contract, or engagement with another. There are some, and those not a few, who, though not actually married, and so may not use the freedoms of matrimony, till the proper time of consummating it, are yet so closely linked together by promises and contract, that they cannot, without mutual consent, leave each other, or cleave to any other.

Both the civil and canon law make a contract as valid and binding as marriage. And an espoused person may no more leave his spouse than a married man his wife. Hence the old law counted it adultery to defile a spouse as well as a wife, and punished both equally with death. So that where a person is contracted to one, he cannot lawfully be married to another; and therefore, this being a just impediment, is here called upon to be confessed, to prevent the entering into an unlawful bond.

Thirdly, Another just hinderance of marriage is the nearness of kin, either by affinity or blood. This is expressly forbidden by God himself, saying, Lev. xviii. 6: 'None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord;' and after proceeds to declare the prohibited degrees of kindred both in the direct and collateral line, which you may read in that chapter, and likewise in tables hung up in churches, that all may see and know them. This being an enormity forbidden by human as well as divine laws, and hath ever been condemned for incest, a thing odious in all civilized nations; yea, the very heathens have abhorred it as an impiety against the law of nature, and all Christians have reckoned it among the vilest abominations: the Jewish doctors look upon it as forbidden by one of the precepts of Noah, which oblige all mankind; one whereof is against 'revealing of nakedness,' which is understood of mingling with those that are too near of kin, or making incestuous matches, which destroy all order and government in families, and bring great distraction and confusion among relations; with many other mischiefs and inconveniences, too

many to be here reckoned up. The apostle calls it a vice, 'that is not so much as named among the Gentiles.' 1 Cor. v. 1. The Romans strictly forbade it under great penalties, and none that ever pretended to religion or good manners ever allowed or suffered it to go unpunished. This, then, being so vile an evil, ought to be confessed before the indissoluble knot is tied, to prevent so great an abomination.

Lastly, Another great impediment of matrimony is the want of parents' consent, if they are alive, or of guardians' if they are dead. Children are part of the goods and substance of their parents, to whom they owe duty and obedience, and may not engage in any great or weighty affair without their knowledge and consent; for they are not, *sui juris*, at their own disposal, but under the conduct and command of parents or guardians. And therefore in the great and important matter of marriage, they are not rashly to run into it of their own heads; but to have the counsel and consent of those relatives that have the power over them, and are best able to advise and direct them.

Thus we find it was in the marriages recorded in the Old Testament; when the consent of parents and friends was always sought and granted in these cases. As in the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, Gen. xxiv., where we read, that she would not go to be married to Isaac till her father Bethuel and brother Laban said to the messenger that came for her, 'Behold, Rebekah is before thee: take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife.' Ver. 51. So Jacob married Leah and Rachel with the consent of their father Laban, Gen. xxix. 19; and the same is affirmed of Shechem and Samson. Gen. xxxiv. 4, and Judges xiv. 2.

In many countries marriages were not reckoned lawful, that were carried on without the will, and against the consent of parents; and children were accounted illegitimate, and unfit to inherit, where this concurrence was wanting. The civil law expressly requires this, to make the marriage lawful, and the issue legitimate, and gives this reason for it; because it is not fit, that any man should have an heir born to him against his will, or that his estate should go to a strange or spurious brood. The Greek church looked upon such marriages to be no better than fornication, and made all that entered into them, liable to the censures of the Church, together with the priest that joined them. And the same or greater punishments are, by our temporal and ecclesiastical laws, ordained with us in such cases: and indeed the many and great evils and inconveniences, that proceed from such hasty and disorderly matches, may sufficiently justify the censures and punishments inflicted on them: for many families have been ruined and undone by their means, and more have led miserable and uncomfortable lives by such unhappy marriages, into which the folly of youth too often betrays them: and therefore the counsel and direction of more aged and experienced

persons, especially of parents, are necessary to be taken in this matter; without which they may not expect the blessing of God, or any success in their affairs, which must render the conjunction more a grief than a comfort, both to themselves and relations. For which reasons the want of parents' consent may be justly reckoned among the impediments of marriage, to be confessed and removed to make it happy. But yet parents are to take care, not to provoke their children to wrath, by an unreasonable stiffness and incompliance with their desires of this kind; they may not deny them the remedy, which God hath allowed and appointed to extinguish those heats, which else may break out into worse flames; nor may they impose upon them any deformed or odious persons, that they cannot love; for that is to expose them to greater temptations, and make them love where they should not. In short,—

Parents should advise discreetly, and propound such matches to their children, as are most likely to tend to the future benefit and comfort of their lives; aiming not so much at the greatness, as the goodness of the persons, with whom they are to pass their time in this world. And children are to hearken to, and be directed by their parents as far as possible, that they may take their blessing along with them; which, with the Divine blessing accompanying it, will make all things go the more happily and comfortably with them.

Thus we see the strict charge given to all persons present, and more especially to the parties to be joined, to discover in time all impediments, that may lie in the way to a lawful marriage, that it may be 'in the Lord,' in his fear, and according to his will; which it behoves all to observe, and the rather, because the Church backs it with this solemn asseveration: 'Be ye well assured, that as many as are coupled together otherwise than God's word doth allow, are not joined together by God, neither is their matrimony lawful.' This is agreeable to the sense, not only of Scripture, but of all antiquity; for both St. Ambrose and St. Jerom declare, that 'Matrimony made contrary to the law of God, ought not to be called matrimony, but adultery.' And who can expect a blessing upon such sinful and adulterous matches? In such cases (as one hath well observed) God himself forbids the bans, and therefore neither the minister, nor parties may go on any further; it being much better to desist from a bad course with safety, than to go on to their endless misery and ruin.

DISCOURSE CCCII.

THE CONSENT OF BOTH PARTIES.

GEN. xxiv. 58.—*And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.*

AFTER the strict charge for revealing and removing all the lets and hinderances of lawful wedlock, and the consent of parents is

obtained thereunto, the minister is ordered to inquire into the consent of the parties that are to be joined, whether they are both agreed in this great affair, and come to be joined with the good-will and liking of each other? A thing highly necessary to the first entrance upon, and the future welfare of that state. For matrimony is defined to be, 'the consenting of two persons to an inseparable state of life,' in which the mutual love and liking of each other is the main ingredient of their happiness; for without that, there can be no content or satisfaction in that state, and where that is wanting, nothing but contention and misery can ensue. This Gordian knot, without concord, is but like Mezentius's 'tying the living and the dead together,' which instead of ease and comfort, can afford only horror and hatred.

And because an explicit consent of both parties is the main requisite in all contracts, and more especially in this of matrimony, the Church hath here prescribed a form of words, for the minister's asking both their consents, which to the man runs thus, 'Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?' To the woman to the same purpose, 'Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?' to both which the reply is, 'I will.'

And of this I shall discourse from the words of the text, and the history of this chapter; wherein Abraham sending and swearing his servant to find out a fit match for his son Isaac, and furnishing him with gifts and presents for that purpose, he was by signs and tokens directed to Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel; to whom, not without the Divine direction, he made those presents, to which both Abraham and Bethuel consented; the latter saying, 'The thing is from the Lord, behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife;' which implies the full consent of both parents. After which, to know the damsel's mind, 'they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man,' to be married to Isaac, 'and she said, I will go:' which implies her full consent also, and so they became man and wife. Which is a regular and proper proceeding, in this great concern of human life, and is alluded to and confirmed in sundry other places of holy Scripture. The like form whereunto we find used among the ancient Romans, where the man was wont to be asked, whether 'he would be the father, and the woman, whether she would be the mother of the family?' and upon both consenting, they were thought fit to be coupled together. And this way all contracts and covenants, and particularly this of wedlock, have been ever entered into.

But to come to the terms and conditions here prescribed in this mutual consent and stipulation; where on the man's part it is asked,—

First, 'Wilt thou have this woman?' the sense whereof is, is this the person you have made choice of, before all the rest of her sex, to be joined to in marriage? Can you be content to prefer and live with her above all others in that holy estate? If

you have any exception, now is the time to declare it, for none can be admitted or hearkened to ever after: and therefore now speak your mind; or else hereafter be for ever silent. Again,—

Secondly, It is asked of him, not only as to the person, but as to the manner of having her; 'Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?' that is, not as a concubine or miss, to be put away at pleasure, but as a wife, to abide and continue with you during life; nor yet as a servant, or slave, to be put upon all sorts of drudgeries, but as a wedded wife, or bosom friend, to be a companion and sharer with thee in all thy goods and estate, and a partner with thee in all thy secrets, counsels and fortunes.

Thirdly, It is farther asked of him, as to the end or design of his having of her, which is or ought to be, to 'live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony.' Now God's ordinance is, that a 'man should leave father and mother, and all others, and cleave to his wife, that they twain may be one flesh.' Whereby they are commanded to dwell together according to knowledge, as companions at bed and at board, not defrauding each other, except it be by consent for a time, the better to attend and perform some religious exercises: this is God's ordinance, which they are carefully to observe and keep to all the days of their life; which is to live together after God's ordinance, to preserve the holiness of that state, and to do otherwise is to unhallow and pollute it. Furthermore,—

The man's consent is asked, as to the duties and offices annexed to that state: as,—

First, with respect to the wife, he is asked, 'Wilt thou love her?' This is the prime duty of marriage, and the best cement of all, and especially conjugal society; which, if true and sincere, will draw all other duties after it: for the two properties of love, 'a desire to please,' and 'a desire to enjoy,' will constitute and complete the happiness of wedlock; the one will make men do all things grateful, the other will fill them with delight in the presence and company of the beloved object, and so love is the fulfilling of all the laws of matrimony: and therefore the man is fitly interrogated about the truth and reality of his affection; 'Wilt thou love her?' meaning his spouse. Is thy mind fixed and settled upon her? and next, under God, wilt thou give her the chiefest seat in thy heart and affections? this is implied in 'leaving father and mother, and cleaving to the wife,' the first and great injunction of matrimony.

Moreover, Secondly, It is asked of him, with respect to his spouse, 'Wilt thou comfort her?' that is, wilt thou cherish her, and make her life as easy and as cheerful as you can, by speaking kindly to her, and avoiding all harsh and provoking language; by keeping off all unnecessary trouble and burdens from her; by helping the infirmities, and removing the sorrows, to which the tenderness of her sex renders her liable? this is another great duty of marriage, that conduces much to the comfort and happi-

ness of it; which true love will prompt men to without grudging, for none think it grievous to do good offices to those whom they sincerely love.

Thirdly, It is farther asked the man, touching his partner, 'Wilt thou honour her?' This is expressly required in holy Scripture, where we are bid to 'give honour to the woman, as to the weaker vessel,' 1 Pet. iii. 7: their weaknesses and infirmities ought not to subject them to contempt, as they often do; but are to be supported with honour, which they not only need, but deserve for their usefulness, and the difficult part they have in the propagation of mankind. Weaker vessels are not to be despised or laid aside, for the fragility of their frame, but rather stengthened and more carefully handled, being many times of more frequent use and service than those that are stronger: for which reason God Almighty hath guarded the female sex from contempt, by requiring respect to be paid to them, upon the account of the greater frailty and tenderness of their constitution, 'having given more abundant honour to that part that lacked.'

And this hath been observed in most civilized countries, especially by persons of the best quality and breeding, who are not wanting in paying the due honour and respect to their consorts, that belongs to them, giving them the helping hand upon all occasions; and allowing them the chief places at bed and at board, and at all times compassionating and relieving their infirmities, which is the honour that God hath assigned to them.

Fourthly, The man is asked about his care in providing for her, in these words, 'Wilt thou keep her in sickness and in health?' and afford her maintenance in all the accidents and conditions of human life? This is expressed in the Old Testament, by giving her 'food and raiment, and other duties of marriage, not to be denied, or diminished to her.' Exod. xxi. 10. In the New Testament, it is styled the 'nourishing and cherishing our own flesh,' Eph. v. 29; which denotes the supplying her with all the necessaries and conveniencies of life; and that not only in health, when she is able to assist and do her part, but also in sickness, when she is disabled, and stands in need of relief and succour.

It is a common saying, that 'a friend is tried in adversity:' it is no mark or trial of friendship, to stand by any in time of prosperity, when they partake of the bounty, and share in the good things of each other; for this may proceed more from self-love, than the love of their friend, as may be sometimes seen in their deserting of them, when those things fail: but to adhere to them in a time of affliction and distress, and to be the same in an adverse as in a prosperous condition, is a good test or token of true love and friendship, which made the wise man say, 'A true friend will love at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.' Prov. xxvii. 17. Now the husband and wife, being but one flesh, stand in the nearest relation to one another; and therefore

should be the truest friends, and give the highest marks of it, in all states and conditions. And it is barbarous (as one hath truly observed) to think her a burden in sickness, who hath been an assistant in health; and such unkind husbands deserve to feel the sad effects of the like inhumanity: for marriage was designed, not only for a companion in health, but a helper in sickness; and as both parties may in their turns stand in need of such relief, so are they obliged mutually to administer it, as occasion and necessity may require.

Lastly, The man is asked, as to his fidelity and constancy to his consort, 'Whether he will forsake all others, and keep only to her, as long as they both shall live?' This is a reasonable condition, required by God, and is absolutely necessary to a quiet and peaceable life in that state: for she forsaking father and mother to cleave to him, it must be very unreasonable and unjust in him, to forsake her to cleave to any other; which unavoidably breeds brawls and confusion in families, and banishes all true love and conjugal affection thence, which can never be entire or sincere, when scattered among more and different objects. And as the 'forsaking all others' plainly prohibits adultery, the bane of matrimony, and all the comfort thereof; so the 'keeping only to her' forbids polygamy, or the having any other with her; a thing condemned by all wise nations, as the occasion of infinite troubles and miseries, both to families and kingdoms.

To prevent which, both God and the Church strictly confine men to one, without addition or separation, during the lives of both parties, or 'as long as they both shall live;' but if either of them die, the knot is dissolved, and the surviving party hath free liberty to marry another.

These are the interrogatories put to the man before, and at the time of marriage, to which he is to give his full and unfeigned consent, by saying, 'I will.' A term used and required in the civil law, to confirm all covenants and contracts; after pronouncing whereof, they stand obliged to answer, and make it good.

Thus we see the form of man's consenting to his entrance into the bond of matrimony. The woman's consent is asked in the following words, much to the same purpose, 'Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?' &c.; where the duties and conditions of the covenant or contract are, for the most part, the same on both sides; for as the man consents to 'have this woman to be his wedded wife,' so the woman consents, in like manner, to 'have this man above any other to be her wedded husband,' and both agree to 'live together after God's ordinance, in the holy state of matrimony.' And as the man promises to 'love, comfort, honour, and keep only to her as long as they both shall live;' so doth the woman promise the same unto the man, viz. to be loving, true, and faithful to him till death.

The only difference is in one additional duty on the woman's side, and that is, 'to obey and serve the man as her lord and master;' which is a condition put upon her, not by any human, but divine authority, by an ordinance of God in the institution of marriage; for God Almighty told Eve, in the name of all her sex, that 'her desire should be to a husband, and he should rule over her.' Gen. iii. 16. But yet,—

This rule must not be with rigour and severity, like that of a tyrant, with an arbitrary and imperious sway, but with meekness and kindness, like that of a father, with gentleness and love, making the 'yoke easy, and the burden light.' And this hath been enjoined in all churches and countries ever since: in the New Testament, we have many precepts commanding the wife to be subject and obedient to her husband, Eph. v. 22, 24; 'Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as it is fit in the Lord; and let the wife be subject to the husband in every thing.' The same is inculcated, Col. iii. 18; 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord.' St. Peter urges this 'subjection by the example of Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.' 1 Pet. iii. 7, 8. And this is grounded both upon nature and reason; for the woman being taken out of the man, and made to be a meet help for him, was fitly subjected to his power and governance: without which, continual contention would arise about the dominion, each of them striving who should be uppermost; to prevent which, the law of God and nature have given man the pre-eminence, and the laws of all nations and countries have done the same; so that obedience and subjection is a tribute due to the husband for the dignity of the sex, which no good wife may refuse to pay. However, the wife being not only a partner with, but a part of the man, 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh,' may not be used with roughness or rigour, but with all tenderness and dearness of affection; for 'he that loveth his wife, loveth himself,' and to be kind to her, is to be 'kind to his own flesh.' Hence a heathen could tell us, that the husband's power over the wife was not to enslave, but to protect her; for she being of the weaker sex, and of a more tender constitution, is liable to more infirmities and misfortunes; from which her best screen and shelter is under the wing of a husband, from whom she receives both honour and defence, for *uxor fulget radiis mariti;* the wife shines by the lustre of her husband, and has all her strength and safety thence. And her subjection and obedience is but a reasonable requital for the protection she needs and finds under him, which makes it her interest, as well as duty, to be subject and obedient to him; for there is no slavery in an obedience that proceeds from love, and a due sense of favours received, which is the ready way to the obtaining more; for that will so far engage the husband's affection to her, that he can deny her nothing that she can reasonably ask: by obeying she may command, and by submitting to his will she may the more easily

have her own; so that no wise woman will think that service a burden, that gains so much affection, and is attended with so good a reward. And therefore to the question, 'Wilt thou serve and obey him?' She may readily answer, as the Church directs, 'I will:' and that seals the contract, and binds to the strict observation of the terms and duties engaged on both sides, which things are to be well weighed and considered beforehand, since they are not after to be revoked.

Thus having removed the impediments of wedlock, and shewed the main requisites to it, viz. the consent of parents and both parties, the Church proceeds to the completing and consummating the match, which shall be the subject of the next.

DISCOURSE CCCIII.

THE GIVING THE WOMAN TO THE MAN.

LUKE xvii. part of the 27th verse. — *They married wives, and were given in marriage.*

AFTER the contract and espousals, consisting in the consent of both parties, and the mutual promises of having each other, made in the presence of God, and the whole congregation, before treated of, there follows, in the next place, the priest's solemnizing the nuptials, or marriage itself; which consists in the actual taking one another into the promised relation. The man, *in verbis de præsenti*, taking the woman to be his 'wedded wife;' and the woman, in like manner, taking the man to be her 'wedded husband:' for both which, a form of words is here prescribed, to be interchangeably rehearsed by each of the parties.

But before that is done, the minister is ordered to ask, 'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?' which question is grounded on the practice recorded in Scripture, where parents, or some other in their stead, are said to give their daughters in marriage: this custom hath been from the beginning, for we read, that when God had formed the woman out of Adam's side, he brought her to him, and gave her to him in marriage. Gen. ii. In the days of Noah, (as our text tells us,) 'the men took wives, and the women were given in marriage.' After which we read, that 'Laban gave his daughter Rachel to Jacob,' with these words, 'It is better that I give her to thee, than that I should give her to another man.' Gen. xxix. 19. And that this was the general practice, we learn from Gen. xxxiv. 16; of which many more instances might be given, both from Scripture and history.

Accordingly, therefore, the Church orders the father, or somebody for him, to give the daughter in marriage; partly to signify the consent of parents, and partly to shew the modesty of the

virgin, by owning she is not at her own, but her parents' disposal, and that she is more drawn into, than desires a husband. Others think this custom to be derived from the old rite of manumission, whereby children and servants, and such as were under the power of another, were wont at such a time, or age, to be delivered up, and given out of hand, and thereby became free and able to covenant for themselves; in like manner, the woman, that hitherto had been under the power of the parent, is by his giving her away, manumitted or delivered out of his power, and may act for herself.

Now this giving the woman, is not immediately to the man, but mediately by the hand of the priest, who is to 'receive the woman at her father's or friend's hand,' and so to deliver her to the man. This is agreeable to ancient practice from the beginning; for we read in the first match that ever was, that God the Father delivered Eve to Adam himself; and hath done the same, by his ministers, in wedlock, ever since, who are therefore still said to be joined together by God; for what he doth by his ministers, is said to be done by himself.

Moreover, the minister is ordered to 'join them together by their right hands,' as a sign or token of the covenant they are then entering into: the joining of hands hath been anciently used, both as a sign of friendship, and as a ceremony of contracting; and giving the hand hath been usually put for making a covenant; as we read, 2 Kings x., where Jehu asked Jehonadab, 'Whether his heart were right towards him?' And if so, to shew it by 'giving the hand.' And Solomon makes the 'joining hand in hand,' as a token of consent and confederation. Prov. xi. 21.

And because the right hand, by frequent use, hath acquired more honour and strength than the other; and for that reason hath been accounted more sacred and lucky, and is generally used to confirm all bargains and contracts; therefore the Church hath ordered the two parties to take each other by the right hand, to strengthen this bond of matrimony. And to this the apostle may allude in the phrase of 'giving the right hand of fellowship,' as a token of entering into the strictest union and society. Gal. ii. 9.

Furthermore, their joining hands may signify their giving the helping hand to one another; and their readiness to assist and defend each other, by joining their heads and hearts, as well as hands together, upon all occasions, as having both the same interests and intentions; and receiving one another as joined by the priest's hand, they may and ought to look upon each other as the gift of God, conveyed to them by the hand of his ministers.

From these preliminary ceremonies and circumstances, to prepare the way, the priest proceeds to consummate the marriage, by the mutual stipulation of both parties, and the actual taking of each other into the near relation of husband and wife; which is done

in a form of words prescribed for that purpose, to be interchangeably repeated after the minister by both of them, which will deserve to be considered.

That on the man's part is in these words: 'I, N. take thee, M. to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance, and thereto I plight thee my troth.' Where we may observe,—

First, That mention is made only of their christian names, which continue with them, without any alteration, to keep them in mind that they are Christians, and are still to live together as such; though the surname of the man, for the dignity of the sex, be ever after made common to both; a few cases of quality being only excepted.

Secondly, We may observe the manner of the man's taking her; which is not (as was before noted) as a concubine, or slave, to be put away, or used with rigour; but as a wedded wife, to be treated with love and kindness, as becomes so near and dear a relation; and whatever distance or inequality there may be in birth, or fortune, or any other worldly circumstances, yet now, being man and wife, they become one flesh, and so are to be of one heart and one mind, to have one purse, one table, and one bed, and in all things partakers of the joys and sorrows of one another; and that not for a little while, but 'to have and to hold' for continuance: those words are 'terms in law,' commonly inserted in 'leases for lives, or years,' to denote the firmness of the tenure, and to give an undoubted title and possession to the persons concerned in them: and by using those terms in matrimony, the parties put themselves in the power and possession of each other; so that 'the wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and likewise also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife,' 1 Cor. vii. 4; meaning, that they give themselves a right in one another. As for the term of its continuance, that the next words declare, viz. 'From this day forward;' that is, it commences with the day of the nuptials, and so continues forward for every day after, to their lives' end.

And to prevent all future exceptions, that may happen after they take each other, 'for better for worse;' that is, with all their faults, known or unknown, whatever the qualities and endowments of the mind are, or whatever the defect or deformity of manners may be, they must create no dislike, but must be content to take all things as they are, and bear with matters as they will go. It behoves them indeed, to look narrowly beforehand, into the disposition and manners of those with whom they are to pass their lives; to weigh all things well, and to search, as far as they may, into the temper and qualities on each side, that they may choose or refuse in time. But if fondness of affection, or want of consideration, or any other mistake, hath drawn them

into a bad choice, they must sit down contentedly under the sad effects of their own folly, and patiently bear the yoke, into which they have willingly put their necks. For as a father, or master, whether gentle or froward, is still a father, or master, and is to be observed accordingly, though we never chose them: so a wife, whether good or bad, is a wife still, and must much more be treated as such, being a cross, or a comfort of our own choosing. The Jews have a proverb, that 'Every one must pick the bone that is fallen to his lot;' and though there be but little marrow, or fatness in it, yet he is to make the most and best of it, and not to cast it away, or render it a bone of contention.

And as they take one another 'for better for worse,' in respect of morals; so do they take them 'for richer for poorer,' in respect of substance. If the husband's estate do not answer the expectation of the wife, or the wife's portion shrink, or fall short in the computation of the husband, both which often happen; they must not abate of their affection, nor suffer any failure in love, for the failure of any worldly substance; but humbly and quietly acquiesce in what hath betided them.

If either of the parties have an accidental inheritance, or preferment given, or fallen to them, whereby their wealth and substance is increased, they are mutually to partake of the benefit, and thankfully to enjoy the comfort of it; and not despise, or undervalue the other, for not contributing to it; or favour each other the less, because Heaven hath favoured them the more.

Or if Providence hath frowned upon any, and the many accidents and casualties of an uncertain world diminished their substance, and reduced them to greater straits; they are not to lessen their love, but rather to increase their care and diligence to repair the misfortune; and so by sharing in one another's good or bad fortune, they will make their joys the greater, and their griefs the less to both.

Indeed, the best and happiest matches are those that are founded upon love, or a true affection to each other's person; for that is a lasting principle, and the firmest bond to unite their hearts, and to keep them together: whereas those that are founded upon beauty, or wealth, or any such vain and worldly consideration, have but a weak and sandy foundation, and no well-grounded hopes of felicity can be raised or built upon them. True love is a fire that will be still burning in the breast, like the vestal flames that were ever kept in, or the altar fires that never went out; but where that is wanting, the fire of wrath is soon kindled, and every cross accident will feed the flames of contention: and because poverty is a great makebate, or a frequent occasion of strife, it is wisely ordered by the Church, that they shall take one another 'for richer for poorer,' that they may not vary from conjugal duty, whatever fortune may befall them.

And therefore the husband promises, in this stipulation, to 'love and cherish his wife,' and that both 'in sickness and in

health;' that is, to be kind and loving to each other in all conditions. Sickness and infirmities are the common fate and miseries of human life, from which none, even the best of men or women, are exempted, but all have their lot and portion in them; and therefore these things ought not to lessen their love, as it too frequently does, but rather to heighten their care and concern for one another. It is unjust and inhuman, for a husband to despise and desert his wife in a time of sickness; and it is no less so, for a wife to forsake, or prove unfaithful to her husband upon that account. These are great faults and miscarriages in both sexes, and are so far from the properties of a good husband, or wife, that they come short of the sympathy and kindness of heathens, and even of brute beasts, who shew more tenderness to their partners in time of distress.

Indeed, Nature, if hearkened to, as well as religion, would teach men more kindness and compassion towards their yoke-fellow; it would give them a fellow-feeling of each other's infirmities, and make them tender her good and welfare equally with their own; especially since religion, by thus taking each other, hath united them together, and made them no longer twain, but one flesh; for 'no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as Christ doth his Church.' Eph. v. 29. And this they are to do, not for a short time, but to their lives' end; or, as the words of the contract are, 'till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance,' who hath bound both husband and wife to live together, as long as they both shall live, and not to depart from each other till death shall part them: all which things are here promised by the husband, and confirmed by that ancient form of stipulation, 'hereto I plight thee my troth.'

This was the old way of expressing the security given in bargains and contracts, where to 'plight' is derived from the old Latin word *plegio*, which signifies to give a pledge, or a pawn, to secure or confirm a thing to us: and to 'plight our troth,' is to pawn our faith, truth, and fidelity, as a pledge to secure the performing the thing promised; and it is by one thus paraphrased: I lay my faith and truth to pledge, and engage the sincerity, honesty, and faithfulness of my word so far, that if I fail, I am content to forfeit all my credit, or belief of either, and never more to be accounted a true, faithful, or honest man; which is as high an asseveration of any truth, as words can reach: and this is the stipulation, or contract of marriage, made on the man's side.

That on the woman's side is in much the same form of words, saying, I, M. take thee N. to be my wedded husband, to have and to hold,' &c. where the only difference (as was before observed in the espousals) is in the addition of the word 'obey;' that whereas the man promises to 'love and cherish his spouse,' the woman promises farther to 'love, cherish, and obey her husband:'

which being laid upon her, by the express will and command of her Maker, no pious nor virtuous woman will scruple, or withhold the duty; especially since the yoke is made so easy, as not to gall, but to defend and adorn her neck: for her obedience is the ready way to command, and her service and submission will prove rather a freedom than a slavery to her, *parendo imperes*, by obeying they may rule; and there is more liberty than slavery in their humble and dutiful subjection to their own husbands. And therefore the Roman ladies were wont, on the wedding-day, or the day after, to celebrate the woman's freedom, as entering then upon a better state of liberty than ever she knew before.

A good husband will look carefully to his affairs abroad, to bring in his substance for the maintenance of the family; and leave the care of the house at home to the management of his wife, which if prudently and providently ordered, will gain her both reputation and power: for her word will be a law, and the husband will think himself obliged, not only to love and to cherish her, but to put power into her hand, if she hath the wisdom and skill to manage and use it aright; by which means her obedience will prove, not a grievance, but a glory to her. Thus we see the nuptials completed, or the marriage-knot tied, which nothing but death can dissolve or untie.

DISCOURSE CCCIV.

THE GIVING THE RING IN MARRIAGE.

LUKE XV. part of the 22d verse.—*The father said unto the servant, bring hither the best robe, and put it on, and put a ring on his hand.*

AFTER the mutual stipulation, and contract of marriage is ended, the Church orders the bridegroom to give a ring unto the bride, as a token of conjugal affection, and a pledge of fidelity and constancy between them.

The words in the rubric are, 'The man shall give a ring unto the woman, laying the same on the book; and the priest, taking the ring, shall deliver it to the man, to put it upon the fourth finger of the woman's left hand; and the man holding the ring there, and taught by the priest, shall say' a certain form of words, which we shall see and speak to after: and of these things I shall treat from the words read, viz. 'The father said to the servant, bring hither the best robe, and put a ring upon his hand.'

The words are part of the parable of the penitent prodigal, who upon his return to his father, was most lovingly received, and feasted by him; for the father fell upon his neck and kissed him, embracing him in his arms, and investing him with the best robe, and as a token of high honour and favour done to him, put a ring on his finger.' All which are emblems, or instances, of the joyful ceremonies and circumstances that attend the

solemnity of marriage; where, beside the marriage-feast, and the wedding-garments, which are both of the best, there is added the signal honour and pledge of the matrimonial, or wedding-ring, which is given at once to confirm and adorn the whole solemnity. In speaking to it, it will be requisite,—

First, To shew the ancient and common use of rings in general.

Secondly, The signification of it here, as it is given in marriage. And,—

Thirdly, To consider the form of words prescribed to be used at the giving of it.

And First, of the ancient and modern use of rings in general. And here, the first and great use of it was, for sealing and conveying of things from one to another, as a sign or pledge to assure them thereof: such was Judah's 'ring,' called his 'signet,' of which we read, Gen. xxxviii. 18. The Egyptians used the ring as a token of investing another with power: so Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's, when he made him governor of Egypt, as we read, Gen. xli. 42. Ahasuerus, the king, promoted Haman by giving him a ring off his finger, Esth. iii. 10, by which he invested him with the highest honour, as well as power: and the Persian kings this way signified their chiefest favourites.

Again, The ring was anciently reckoned among the chief ornaments of the better sort, as we read, Isa. iii. 21. St. James makes mention of a 'man with a gold ring, and costly apparel,' as one that is generally received, and 'respected above others.' James ii. 2. Among the Romans it was a mark of freedom; for no servant or slave were permitted to wear a gold ring, which belonged only to persons of a higher rank and quality.

Moreover, The giving of a ring was used as a token of a more peculiar love and favour to the person to whom it was given: thus it was in our text, where the father, overjoyed at the return of his lost son, commanded the best robe to be put upon him, with a ring on his finger, as an instance of that ardent and unfeigned affection he bore to him. From the general use of the ring, upon sundry occasions, I proceed,—

Secondly, To the particular use and signification of it in marriage; and here it serves to all, or most of the forementioned purposes. For, 1st, It is given by the husband to the woman, as a seal of the covenant or contract made between them. In all covenants we find some lasting and remarkable thing appointed as a sign or memorial of it: thus 'Laban's heap and pillar was a witness,' or pledge of safety and security to those that passed by. Gen. xxxi. 52. And such was the 'stone' set up by Joshua, as a 'witness of the covenant' made between God and his people. Josh. xxiv. 26, 27. And as an earnest or pledge is wont to be given to secure a bargain; so the matrimonial ring is designed as a lasting sign and memorial of the vow and covenant betwixt

them made; that as often as they see it, they may be put in mind of what they have promised to each other, and moved the more effectually to perform it. 2dly, The man's giving his spouse the ring, denotes his investing her with the honour of his person, with the power of his family, with the care and use of his goods, and thereby making her his chief favourite; assuming her into the highest degrees of love and friendship, admitting her to be a sharer in his counsels and secrets, and a partner in his honour and estate; for which reason we are told, that not only the ring, but the keys also, were delivered to her on the day of marriage.

These are no new novel devices or usurpations, as some would have them, but the known customs and practices of ancient times. Juvenal makes mention in his time of a pledge given to the spouse's finger:—'*Digito pignus fortasse dedisti.*'

Tertullian, in his Apology, speaks of the 'finger, which the bridegroom affiances with the wedding ring.' Clemens Alexandrinus tells us, that the primitive Christians gave their wives a gold ring, not for ornament only, but to shew them to be worthy of the government of the house and care of the family. A learned divine of our own, hath derived down this innocent and universally received custom through all the ages of the Church ever since: and therefore our wise reformers thought fit to retain this ancient usage in the celebrating of marriage, which is still observed by the reformed churches abroad. So little reason is there to hearken to the trifling cavils and exceptions of a few innovating dissenters, against a harmless rite, which hath so much authority from Scripture and antiquity to countenance and confirm it.

The finger on which the ring is ordered to be placed is, 'the fourth finger of the left hand,' called therefore by the Romans the ring finger; of which some have offered at giving some reasons: for first, there are those, and not a few, both of ancient and modern writers, that tell us of a vein or vessel coming from the heart to that finger, and so make it a fit emblem and vehicle of cordial affection, both to convey and continue it in the heart. There are others again who tell us, that the placing of the ring on the fourth finger of the left hand, which is of all the rest least used, renders it least subject to decay or wearing out, and so may represent the most durable and lasting affection. But leaving these nice, and perhaps groundless conjectures, it is enough for us to rest satisfied with the ancient custom and practice of the Church herein, which is a sufficient foundation for the using and ordering of this innocent and decent ceremony.

After the ring is thus placed, the man, holding it there, is taught by the minister to say these words: 'With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.' Where the man, as the principal

person, is properly said to wed his wife; and the woman, as passive, by the modesty of the sex, is supposed to be led and persuaded to it; and, by the present of a ring, as an earnest and token of future love and kindness, is encouraged to yield and assent to it. For her farther encouragement, the man is taught to say, 'with my body I thee worship;' which words import the 'honour' that is to be 'given to the woman as the weaker vessel,' commanded by St. Peter, in the 1st Epistle, chap. ii. ver. 7. I know some have vainly excepted against that expression, 'with my body I thee worship,' as if it implied the man's idolizing of her, and required him to fall down and worship her; which is so far from true, that all the honour, required to be paid to her, is upon the account of her infirmity, not any extraordinary perfection; it is honouring her 'as the weaker vessel,' which implies rather assistance than adoration.

But, to clear up this matter, we must note, that beside the sacred and religious worship, consisting in offering up prayers and praises, and other acts of adoration, which belong to God only; there is also a civil and corporeal worship, consisting in a decent and respectful behaviour of the body, and this is due to our fellow-creatures in the several places and stations wherein God hath set them. Thus, in the parable of the feast, wherein we are 'bid to take the lowest room, till he that inviteth say, Sit up higher, then shall we have worship,' that is, honour and respect, in the presence of all that sit at meat with us. Luke xiv. 7—9. And this is the worship that we are to pay to our yoke-fellow, whom we have chosen for the consort and companion of our lives, and therefore ought to be nearest at heart, and dearest in affection. And to her it is that this bodily worship is here promised and given, which is partly internal, by honouring her in our mind, and having her in due esteem; and partly external, by the honour of the body, in bowing to her as a token of love and respect, and rendering to her due benevolence, as the apostle hath commanded; lest 'thy wife grind to another, and let others bow down upon her,' as Job expresses it, chap. xxxi. 10. So that the sense of that saying, 'with my body I thee worship,' is the man's giving her the honour of his person, and making her a partner in the titles, dignities, and preferments that accrue to him: not receiving her merely as a concubine, which adds no honour, but rather shame and disgrace to her; but as a wedded wife, which entitles her to a share in all the honours and comforts that belong to him; into which, by those words, he puts her into possession. And for the support of that honour and dignity, with which the man invests her, he farther adds, in the next words,—

'With all my worldly goods I thee endow;' the meaning whereof is, the man's allowing her a maintenance suitable to her condition and quality, and becoming the honour of his person, and the dignity of the relation he hath received her into; that is,

to maintain her as his consort and dearly beloved spouse. This is what God hath allotted and appointed for her, who hath expressly commanded, 'that food and raiment, and the duty of marriage be not diminished, or withheld from her.' Exod. xxi. 10. Accordingly, the man here solemnly 'endows her with all his goods;' that is, he charges his whole estate with providing a sufficient portion or competence for her support and maintenance. And indeed it is but reason, that she, having given herself, her portion, her body, and all that she hath to her husband, should be endowed with his goods and estate, and to have all things in common. In token hereof, there was an old custom, which continues with us in some places to this day, that the man was at the time of marriage to lay down a sum of money on the book, out of which, the minister having taken the dues of marriage, is to give the remainder to the bride, as a token of the husband's endowing of her, and entitling her to all the rest: but yet this is not so to be understood, as if the man parted with his own right in his goods and substance, and so depend only upon the courtesy and kindness of his wife; no, it is so far from that, that the wife during the life of her husband, hath no direct dominion over his substance and estate, so as to alienate or dispose of any part of it, without his knowledge and consent, but only to enjoy the benefit and comfort of it together with him.

In short, the husband endows her here, not with the propriety, but only with the use of his worldly goods, as her necessities and occasions shall require, which is as much as is fitting and convenient for her to desire or receive. And this is here most solemnly engaged and ensured to her, 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Where the three Persons of the ever-blessed Trinity are solemnly invoked as witnesses of the contract, and avengers of any breach or violation of it. And therefore it will highly concern both the parties, as they tender the glory of God, the comfort of their lives in this world, and the salvation of their souls in the next, to be true to their engagements on both sides, and faithfully observe the terms and duties of the marriage covenant, which they have thus publicly entered into.

The following part of this office is spent in prayers, praises, and exhortations, suited to the occasion of this solemnity, which must therefore be particularly considered and spoken to.

DISCOURSE CCCV.

THE MINISTER'S BLESSING THE PARTIES.

2 Sam. vi. 18.—*As soon as David had made an end of offering, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.*

Having finished all the necessary and essential parts of matrimony, home to the ring given, as a pledge to secure and

confirm the whole affair, I proceed to the prayers appointed by the Church for a blessing upon it; without which, as nothing we take in hand can prosper, so neither can the joining of hands in marriage tend to any good effect. The very heathens would not enter into any covenant, without a sacrifice to their idol gods, to enable them to perform it; how much less should Christians enter into this solemn contract, without imploring the Divine blessing, which alone can make it happy and effectual to them? And for this our Church hath taken particular care in the following part of this office, of which I shall treat from these words of the text, 'As soon as David had made an end of offering, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts.' In like manner, as soon as the minister hath completed the contract, both the parties are ordered to 'kneel' before him, and he to bless them in the name of the Lord, by saying the following prayer: 'O eternal God, Creator and Preserver of all mankind, Giver of all spiritual grace, and Author of everlasting life, send thy blessing upon these thy servants, whom we bless in thy name,' &c. Where we may observe,—

First, The attributes or titles given to God upon this occasion, which are,—

First, His 'eternity, 'without inconstancy or change,—'O eternal God.'

Secondly, His 'power,' as being the 'Creator and Preserver of all mankind.'

Thirdly, His 'goodness,' as he is 'the Giver of all spiritual grace here,' and 'the Author of everlasting life hereafter.'

Secondly, We may observe the petition, put up to him upon these accounts; and that is, to 'send his blessing upon these his servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in his name;' which without his blessing will be of no avail.

Thirdly, The example of a holy couple, who lived happily together by this means; and that is, of Isaac and Rebekah, who are therefore recommended to our imitation.

Fourthly, The matter or thing prayed for, and that is, that the present couple may imitate and follow them, in fidelity to their promises and contracts, 'that as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely keep and perform the vow and covenant betwixt them made,' whereof the ring given and received is a token and pledge. And,—

Lastly, The end and design of all this, which is, 'that they may ever remain in perfect love and peace together, and live according to God's laws, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Of each of these something particularly, beginning with the attributes or titles here given to God upon this occasion, where we First, recognise his 'eternity,' saying, 'O eternal God,' in opposition to our frail and mutable condition; for whereas 'we are but of yesterday,' and may be gone to-morrow, 'he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:' and though we are daily subject to

vicissitudes and change, yet he is 'without variableness or shadow of turning.' This we find the Psalmist often acknowledging, saying, 'From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, and thy years shall not fail.' Our bodies consist of such perishing materials as are still liable to decay, and will not suffer us to continue long here; and therefore we marry to supply the defects of our mortality, and affect a sort of immortality, by living in our posterity; which leads us to admire and adore the 'eternity' of our Maker, who hath 'no beginning or end of days,' but 'lives for ever and world without end.'

Secondly, We recognise and celebrate his 'power,' as 'the Creator and Preserver of all mankind:' thus we find David often setting forth the glory and greatness of the Divine power in making heaven and earth, and all things contained therein. 'Thou art worthy, O Lord, (saith the church in the Revelations,) to receive honour and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Rev. iv. 11. Holy Job commemorates him, not only as the Creator, but as the 'Preserver of all mankind,' Job vii. 20, 'What shall we say unto thee, O thou Preserver of men:' and so he is among other ways, by appointing marriage for the propagating and pepetuating of mankind.

Thirdly, We adore the 'goodness' and 'mercy' of God, by styling him 'the Giver of all spiritual grace, and the Author of everlasting life:' this we learn from the Psalmist, who tells us, that 'he giveth grace and glory, and withholds no good thing from them that lead a godly life.' And St. James, that 'every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.' Chap. i. 17. St. Peter styles him 'the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory.' 1 Pet. v. 10. And elsewhere he is said to be 'the Author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey him.' Heb. v. 9. These attributes of God are here mentioned as motives of mercy and consolation at all times, but more especially at the entering into the marriage covenant, to quicken our faith and hope in God, as our Creator, Preserver, and great Benefactor. They are used here to usher in the following petition, which is our

Second particular, in these words, 'Send thy blessing upon these thy servants, this man and this woman, whom we bless in thy name.' The blessing of God is of so great concern and use to us in all our affairs, that nothing can succeed well, or do us any good without it; and therefore is at all times, and in all cases, to be earnestly begged and sought after; but most chiefly in the great affair of matrimony, upon which the whole comfort and happiness of life so much depends. And therefore we read, that in the Greek church, this petition, 'God bless this marriage,' is never omitted upon this occasion. And our Church hath ordered the same or like petition to be used at all nuptials, saying, 'Lord, send thy blessing upon these thy servants, both man and woman, whom we bless in thy name.' For as God is said to

bless, by bestowing his good things, so the priest is said to bless in his name by suing and praying for them. And that both these may be the more effectual and successful, we have,—

Thirdly, The example of a happy couple recorded in Scripture for our encouragement and imitation, and that is of Isaac and Rebekah, who are renowned for their 'living faithfully together:' this instance is here propounded, partly as a direction how we may be so blessed as they were; and partly to stir up all in that condition to follow so good an example; and partly likewise as a foundation of hope, that in being and doing as they did, God will so bless us as he did them. To attain which, the ancient liturgies particularly rehearse many more instances of conjugal duty and affection, to wit, that of Abraham and Sarah, of Moses and Zipporah, of Joachim and Anna, of Zachary and Elizabeth, and divers others, to excite our imitation, and preserve the like affection by those pious examples, which married persons should ever have before their eyes, that they may never transgress or vary from them. These excellent precedents are by our Church turned into prayers, that the present pair may tread in their steps, and thereby attain to the same or like blessings. And this will lead to the subject-matter of these prayers, the next thing to be considered.

And that is, first and chiefly, fidelity to their promises to each other, during the bond of wedlock; 'that as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may most surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them made, whereof the ring given and received is a token and pledge.' Isaac was a famous instance of chastity and fidelity, having only one wife, and keeping faithfully to her, in a country where it was the known common practice to do otherwise; he was not carried away by the vices of the times, but kept himself true to his spouse, and unspotted from the world, for which God blessed him, and made him the father of many nations; yea, the promised seed came from his loins, 'as it is written, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.'

Indeed, the honour of chastity, and the rewards of fidelity, are great enough, to encourage all wise men to a due regard and practice of both. Joseph's chastity, in rejecting the lewd overtures and temptations of his mistress, hath made him memorable ever since, and will be so to all generations: whereas incontinence, and the breach of the marriage contract, sink the reputation of the greatest persons, and leave an indelible brand of infamy upon all, that abandon themselves to such vile practices. They are attended with punishments of all sorts, both in this life and the next: in this life they frequently meet with sundry plagues and diseases, which yet are but the forerunners of far greater judgments to come; for 'whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.' Meaning, that he will take them into his own hands, and punish them himself; and therefore the Church hath ordered prayers to be offered up for all that enter into that state, that

they may preserve the honour of it, and keep the bed undefiled, by faithfully keeping and performing the vow and covenant made between them, which being dignified and confirmed by so many tokens and pledges, cannot be violated by any, without the peril of eternal damnation.

Secondly, Another thing prayed for, in their behalf, is, constancy and perseverance in their duty, and affection to each other to their lives' end, that 'they may ever remain in perfect love together.' There are some who begin this state with affection enough, if not with too great fondness and eagerness of desire, which ofttimes proves too violent to continue, and so languishes or expires into hatred and dislike. Such paroxysms of love, like the fits of an ague, go and come, the hot fit being soon followed with the cold, having no even or lasting principle of love to hold them together. This is a fickle and inconstant state of affairs, that can have little or no comfort or pleasure to recommend it: and therefore we pray for the present couple, that their love may be guided with discretion, not too eager and violent, for that will not last long; but moderate, hearty, and uniform, which will give it the more lasting continuance. But above all, that their love may be founded upon a right bottom, that is, not so much upon any worldly considerations, which have but a weak and sandy foundation, as upon principles of virtue and goodness, upon the love of God, and a sense of duty, which will add greater strength, and make it more permanent and lasting.

Thirdly, Another thing here prayed for, in their behalf, is, peace and concord; that 'they may live in perfect peace together.' This will follow upon the former, for love and peace are those inseparable bonds that go and tie hearts together; where love is there will be peace, and where peace is there love will not be wanting. These generally attend each other, and cannot well be asunder. And where peace and love meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other, there all things will go well, and all earthly comforts and happiness will ensue: but where these are separated, nothing but trouble and misery can arise. For that will abate the comfort of other blessings, and take off the relish and sweetness of all other enjoyments. The wise man tells us, that 'better is a dinner of herbs, where love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith.' Prov. xv. 17. And experience shews us, that a loving and agreeing couple taste more of the goodness of God in their mean and common fare, than contentious persons do in all their richer and more delicious dainties: for 'better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than a house full of sacrifices with strife.' Prov. xvii. 1. And for cohabitation, the same wise man tells us, that 'it is better to live in a corner of the house-top, than with a brawling woman in a wide house,' Prov. xxi. 9; and ver. 19, 'It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman:' so that the main, if not the whole comfort of conjugal society,

consists in the mutual concord and good agreement of both parties, which is therefore not only to be prayed, but to be studied and laboured for. And to that end, neither must the husband provoke the wife, by any rigorous or imperious sway over her; nor the wife incense the husband, by usurping the power and authority over him; but both live in a loving and faithful discharge of the duties they owe to one another: and this will lead to the

Third and last thing to be prayed for, in the behalf of married persons, and that is, piety and devotion towards God, expressed here by 'living according to God's laws.' Now, those laws require them to lead holy and religious lives, by calling upon God for what they want, and praising him for all they receive; by governing their passions, and guiding their words with discretion; by bearing with each other's infirmities, and assisting in all their afflictions. In short, the laws of God enjoin humility and patience, honesty and charity, sobriety and chastity, meekness and moderation; and they who lead their lives by the rules of these excellent virtues, will surely reap the benefit and comfort of them, and find the blessing of God upon all that they have or do; which God grant, for the merits of Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE CCCVI.

THE RATIFICATION OF THE MARRIAGE.

MATT. xix. part of the 6th verse. — *What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*

THE marriage-knot being now tied, and the bond of wedlock thus solemnly entered into, there follow in this office the obligation, publication, and benediction of it, with respect to the present pair; all which must be briefly and particularly considered. And,—

First, The obligation, or ratification of it, by the minister, is, by once more joining of hands, and saying, in the words of our text, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'

The words are a part of our Saviour's answer to an insidious question of the Pharisees, who came to him, tempting him, and saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?' To which he replied, by referring them to the first institution of marriage, saying unto them, 'Have ye not read, that he who made them in the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh, wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh;' and then follow these words, 'What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.' That is, being by the Divine will united into one, no human power may part or divide them: so

that from this discourse of our blessed Saviour, two things may be gathered, worthy of our observation.

First, That in all lawful marriages, both the parties are 'joined together by God.'

Secondly, That being so, no man may separate, or 'put them asunder.'

For the First, That the married couple are joined together by God, is so plainly asserted in holy Scripture, that there can be no need of insisting long on the proof of it; the words of our Saviour in the text are full and express, 'those whom God hath joined together;' which manifestly supposes it to be the act of God, done in his name, and by his authority, as sundry other places of Scripture fully declare. The first institution of marriage was from God, who of twain made one flesh, accordingly he gave and joined Eve to Adam himself, and hath given power and authority to his ministers to do the same ever since; and what is done by his order and appointment, is said to be done by God himself: hence the marriage covenant is styled the covenant of God, and she that violates it is said to 'forget the covenant of her God;' yea, we read that the very heathens thought their gods to be the makers of their matches, and therefore would not enter upon it, till they had offered up their sacrifices unto them. It is a frequent saying, in the mouths of many among us, that 'marriages are made in heaven,' though some impatient persons have thought them long a coming from thence.

However, wise men have ever looked upon them as ordered and settled by a Divine designation and appointment; for since the providence of God extends to the smallest matters, even to the hairs of our head, which are all numbered, we may well think it directs the much greater affairs of human life, among which matrimony hath been ever reckoned one of the greatest.

And therefore the heathens had a particular deity to preside over it, whom they invocated to make it lucky and auspicious. The prophet Malachi brings in God Almighty as a 'witness between a man and his wife,' and a judge to avenge their treachery or unfaithfulness, forbidding all 'treacherous dealing against the wife of his youth, his companion, and the wife of his covenant.' Mal. ii. 14. And as it adds much to the sin of breaking the matrimonial vow, that it was signed and sealed in the presence of God, both as a witness and a judge; so it makes much for the honour of wedlock, that the parties are both joined together by God, and all things ordered in it by a Divine hand, which makes the bond the more firm, the more venerable, and the more inviolable; and being so, our text rightly infers,—

Secondly, That no human power can dissolve or disannul it; for what God hath put together, no man without his leave or order may put asunder: no inferior power can vacate or overrule that of a superior, and much less can any earthly judicatory make void the decrees and ordinances of Heaven. It must be a

very high degree of arrogance and presumption, for any creature to pretend to rescind or reverse the acts of his Maker; nor may Christ's pretended vicar go about to separate those whom his Master hath joined in an inseparable state. The bond of wedlock is too firmly fastened by divine and human laws, to be easily broken, and husband and wife are tied so fast together, by the cords of love and duty, as not to be loosed by any other than a divine hand: nothing but death can untie this Gordian knot between man and wife, which is so closely twisted together, that it admits of no dissolution, but by the dissolution of one of the parties. This is the express doctrine and command of our blessed Saviour in this case, who hath given it as a rule for all his disciples to follow.

He had observed the common and corrupt practices of the Jews and others, in the matter of divorce, how they put away their wives upon every slight occasion, and married another to the great disturbance of families and countries, which evil practice was too much countenanced and defended by the Pharisees, upon the pretended warrant of Moses's bill of divorce, by which they taught men to dismiss their wives upon any dislike or trivial matter that might arise; hence we read of some that put away their wives, because 'they were not pleased with their manners,' others because 'they were old,' others because 'another was more gracious in their eyes,' and the like, by which means, divorces became almost as frequent as marriages, and wives led very precarious and miserable lives.

To remedy these evils, and to restrain the exorbitant liberty, or rather licentiousness of divorces, our Saviour here enlarges upon this subject, to set his followers right in a matter of such consequence. To which end, he reduces them to the first original of matrimony, telling them that 'from the beginning it was not so:' for God created one woman for one man, and united them into one flesh, willing them to leave all others, and continue in one bond of affection together, without any division or separation. And when the Pharisees asked, 'Why then did Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and put her away?' He told them, that Moses suffered that, not for the goodness of the thing, but 'for the hardness of men's hearts;' to prevent the murders, adulteries, and other heinous crimes, which their hatred, and unbridled lusts and passions might otherwise lead them into: but it should not be so among them, whom he willed to live faithfully and constantly with their chosen consorts, and to preserve 'a chaste conversation,' coupled with fear of offending any of those ways: adding that 'whosoever putteth away his wife, except it be for fornication, committeth adultery; and whoso marrieth her, that is put away, doth commit adultery.' And when the disciples farther objected, 'If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry; he said unto them, that all men cannot receive that saying, save they to whom it is

given;' meaning, that all men have not the gift of continence, to live chastely in a single life, and such he advises to have recourse to the remedy provided in that case; that is, if 'they cannot contain, let them marry;' for 'it is better to marry than to burn in lust one to another;' where he rather directs to, than dissuades from the use of the remedy appointed by God, to prevent or extinguish those impure flames. By all which it appears, that our blessed Saviour, not only approved of, but confirmed the bond of wedlock; for he checked the frequency of divorce, and forbad either of the divorced parties to marry another, whilst both of them were living; for that sacred contract binds them till death, and nothing else can part them. And even where a 'divorce' is duly granted, that doth not wholly dissolve the bond of matrimony, which so far continues in force, after the separation, as to hinder either party from taking another, during the term of their lives. This is the doctrine of the Church, confirmed by our Saviour and the apostles, and derived down by fathers and councils ever since: and so much for the ratification of marriage, by those words of our Saviour, 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'

The next is, The minister's publication of it to the people, with respect to the present couple, to certify them, that all things are duly performed relating to this solemnity, and this is contained in those words,—

'Forasmuch as A. B. have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same before God and this company, and thereto have given and pledged their troth either to other; and have declared the same by giving and receiving a ring, and joining of hands, I pronounce that they are man and wife together, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' This is done for the honour of marriage, to shew that it may be publicly owned in the face of the sun, and of the whole world; and so distinguish it from those clancular concealed matches, that cannot bear the light, and are ashamed to be seen. The form of words contains,—

First, A recapitulation, or repetition of all the material parts and ceremonies of this contract going before, of which we have here a particular enumeration. As first of the mutual consent of both parties, 'forasmuch as they have consented together in holy wedlock;' this is the first and principal requisite of this holy covenant, and the sole foundation of all that follows; for the parties must both agree to take each other, before there can be any farther proceedings in it; and this too is to be well testified, by 'witnessing the same before God, and the company' there assembled; the best and most competent attestation of this affair: where it must be likewise confirmed by their own mouths, by 'giving and pledging their troth either to other;' that is, by promises of fidelity and constancy to one another; as also by 'declaring the same' by some significant signs and ceremonies, as

the 'giving and receiving a ring, and joining of hands,' things anciently used in all times, and in all churches for this purpose. All which things being duly performed, as hath been before seen, the minister proceeds solemnly to declare the validity of the marriage, by 'pronouncing them to be man and wife together,' to signify that they are ever hereafter to cohabit, and treat one another as such; and to beget the greater reverence and regard to this solemnity, he again invocates the name and authority of the whole Trinity, 'the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' to witness and confirm it.

These holy rites and ceremonies are performed, partly as a testimony of the truth and reality of it to the world; and partly to fix their minds, and keep their affections from straying from one another; and partly likewise to null all former, and to prevent all future addresses, or applications of this kind, to either of them, by any other: for which ends, the Church hath further required the registering of it, that recourse may be had to it, for some secular uses and purposes, to which the recording of it may prove serviceable.

Lastly, To the priest's publication of the marriage, there is added in the close, the priest's benediction of the parties; wherein, according to the example of David, who 'when he had made an end of sacrificing, blessed the paople in the name of the Lord;' the minister, in like manner, having finished the matrimony, blesses the new-married couple in these words, 'God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, bless, preserve, and keep you; the Lord mercifully with his favour look upon you, and so fill you with all spiritual benediction and grace, that ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting.' Where we have First, a full confession of faith in the holy Trinity, and of the Godhead of each person, 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;' to which faith we are firmly to adhere against the Arians of old, and the Socinians, deists, and libertines of our times. Next, we have a particular address to each of those divine persons, to 'bless' the present couple in all their affairs; to 'preserve' them in all dangers, and to 'keep' them in all their ways. Moreover, he petitions in their behalf, that God would 'mercifully with his favour look upon them,' to pardon their sins, and to remove all spiritual evils from them: as also to 'fill them with all spiritual benediction and grace,' that by living together a life of grace here, they may attain together to a life of glory hereafter. All which things he asks for them in the name, and for the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord

DISCOURSE CCCVII.

THE JOY GIVEN TO THE MARRIED COUPLE.

PSAL. cxxviii. 1, 2, 3, to the end.—*Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, and walk in his ways: for thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands, O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be. Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine upon the walls of thy house; thy children like olive-branches round about thy table: lo, thus shall the man be blessed, that feareth the Lord,* &c.

THE office of matrimony being now finished, as to the essential parts of it, by the priest's joining the persons in that holy and inseparable state, by pronouncing them man and wife, and blessing them accordingly; the Church proceeds to wish them joy, and to celebrate the solemnity, with praises and thanksgivings; the wise man tells us, that 'there is a time for all things, a time to laugh, and a time to mourn, a time to sing, and a time to dance, and that every thing is beautiful in its season.' The apostle wills us, to 'rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' Rom. xii. That is, to sympathize with each other upon all occasions, and to partake of one another's joys and sorrows, which will double the one, and lessen the other. And as it would be improper to sing and be merry at a funeral; so is it no less unbecoming to be sad and melancholy at a wedding: and because this hath been ever reckoned a proper season for mirth and cheerfulness, here are psalms or hymns appointed to be said or sung upon this occasion, according to that of the apostle; 'If any be merry, let them sing psalms.' James v. 13. The first of these is that which I have read to you, and comes now to be discoursed of; it is said to be composed for a marriage-song, the parts of it being all suited to that solemnity. The Jews (we are told) anciently used it at their nuptials, and all christian churches have ever given it a place in their marriage-office, and it will therefore deserve a little explication.

It begins with a general blessing, pronounced and promised to all good men, saying, 'Blessed are all they that fear the Lord, and walk in his ways:' which is here branched out into several particular blessings, temporal, spiritual, and eternal. The temporal blessings are either private, relating to private persons and families; or public, relating to the whole Church and country, which things are the subject of this psalm, and must be briefly spoken to.

In the general blessing, we are to consider the persons pronounced blessed, and likewise the blessings promised, and appertaining to them.

The persons are, 'all they that fear the Lord, and walk in his ways,' ver. 1. Where the 'fearing the Lord,' is the forsaking of all evil ways, that are contrary and displeasing to him: and 'the walking in his ways,' is the keeping close to the rule of his

commandments, which is the doing of things acceptable and well-pleasing to him; both which are the parts of that piety and duty we all owe to our Maker, and are to be more particularly minded by all married couples, at their entrance into that holy state, which they are to begin with the 'fear of God,' which is, 'the beginning of wisdom,' and to continue and hold on it to the end; 'the fear of God and keeping his commandments' being the end, as well as the beginning of all our wisdom. For such pious practices will surely bring us to peace at the last, and not only so, but will bring a blessing in the whole course of our lives: whereas the casting off this fear, and following our own hearts' lusts, will be attended with a curse, that will follow us all our days, and pursue us into the other world, to aggravate and increase our condemnation. In short, the holy Scriptures every where pronounce those 'blessed, that walk in the way of the Lord, and keep themselves unspotted from the world.' Which blessing will be partly in this life, but principally in the next. In this life they shall be blessed, both with private blessings relating to their own family; and with public blessings, relating to the whole Church and country; both which are promised in this psalm, to all such as 'fear the Lord, and walk in his ways.' As for private blessings, relating to particular persons and families, they are mentioned in the 2d and following verses.

As, First, Prosperity and success in all their affairs, in these words, 'Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.'

Secondly, Health and safety in their bodies, in those, 'O well is thee.' And,—

Thirdly, Peace and tranquillity in their minds, in those, 'And happy shalt thou be.' Of each of these something briefly.

And, First, Here is promised to married persons, success and comfort in all their labours. 'Thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands.' It was one of the first of God's ordinances, that every one 'should live by his own labour, and eat their bread in the sweat of their own brow.' Gen. iii. 19. And the apostle gives it in charge, 'that he that will not work, must not eat.' 2 Thes. iii. 10. And therefore exhorts all Christians, that 'with quietness they work, and eat their own bread;' as if it were not their own bread, unless it be earned by their own labour. And for their comfort he lets them know, that 'their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord;' for they 'shall reap the fruits of their labour,' and 'eat the labours of their hands.'

It is indeed a great blessing, not only to have the good things of this life, but to have likewise a heart to use and enjoy them; which some, by a too great distrust of Divine Providence, unhappily deprive themselves of. And as idleness and rapine put many upon eating others' bread; so doth niggardliness and diffidence keep others from eating their own: both which provoke God to withdraw good things from them, or to take out all the sweetness and comfort in the use of them. This is farther

enlarged upon in Deuteronomy, chap. xxviii. Where we read of many heavy and dreadful curses entailed upon a lewd and vicious life, which blast all the comforts of it: as also of many great and unspeakable blessings, that attend a virtuous and chaste conversation; which sweeten all their enjoyments, and give them freely and cheerfully to eat the labours of their own hands.

Secondly, Here is a promise of health and ease of body; in those words, 'O well is thee.' Sickness is often expressed by being ill, as health is by being well, or matters going well with us, which is a very desirable blessing. In times of sickness all things go amiss; we taste no sweetness in any thing we have, and the best things can afford little or no comfort to us. It is health that gives the relish to all our enjoyments, without which they are all sapless and insignificant. Now as 'health is far from the ungodly, because they keep not God's laws,' nor observe the rules of temperance, patience, and sobriety, the best preservatives of health, and soundness of body: so the 'voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous;' because they govern themselves by God's laws, and walk in the paths of his commandments. To these shall be added,—

Thirdly, Peace and tranquillity of mind, the main ingredient of happiness, implied in those words, 'And happy shalt thou be.' *Mens sana in corpore sano:* an easy quiet mind, in a sound body, completes all earthly felicity; and that commonly attends the practice of religion and virtue, and in a married state is peculiar to them that lead a holy and chaste conversation: for 'there is no peace to the wicked, (saith my God) but they are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up nothing but mire and dirt.' Isa. xxiii. But 'great peace have they that keep thy law, (saith holy David) and nothing shall offend them.' Psal. cxix. These blessings are usually observed to attend a virtuous couple, and that not only in their own persons, but extend likewise to their families and relatives, their wives and children also partaking of their blessings: so the Psalmist in the next verse tells us, 'Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine upon the walls of thine house;' that is, she shall bless thee with a numerous offspring, and be both a stay and ornament to thy house.

The 'vine,' you know, is of a spreading extensive nature; it sprouts forth in many green and flourishing branches, that not only adorn the walls, but afford rich and delicious fruit to those that are within the house. In like manner, a virtuous wife springs forth in many lovely branches, by being a fruitful mother of children, who shall be a comfort and support to their parents, and thereby made happy in one another.

And as the 'wife' is compared to the 'fruitful vine upon the walls of the house;' so the 'children' are resembled to the 'olive-branches round about the table:' where there is an allusion to the olive-plants in the eastern countries; which (as a learned man tells us) being always fresh and green, were wont to be

planted about tables in men's gardens, both for shadow and ornament: and this is a fit resemblance of good children sitting about their father's table, which is both a pleasing and profitable prospect to the family, of which they are members; and growing up in virtue and good manners, become not only a comfort, but a credit and support to the parents, who begat and educated them. Hence 'children are' said to be 'an heritage or gift that cometh of the Lord: like as arrows in the hand of a giant, even so are young children; happy is the man who hath his quiver full of them, they shall not be ashamed, when they speak with their enemies in the gate.' Psal. cxxvii. 4, 5. An arrow shot by the hand of a strong man, will fly farther and pierce deeper, than one that proceeds from a weaker arm; which signifies to us, that they who are blessed with many and good children, have a more lasting memorial, and are better defended, than they who are destitute of any. From all which the Psalmist breaks out into *epiphonema:* 'Lo! thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord,' ver. 5. Where he confines these blessings only to such as live in love and peace together, and have the fear of God always before their eyes. As for the ungodly, 'it is not so with them;' for 'they are like the chaff, which the wind scatters to and fro in the earth; for the Lord knoweth and approveth the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' Psal. i. and the latter end.

They who lead loose or contentious lives, make both themselves and their family miserable; they derive a curse, rather than a blessing, upon their relatives, and entail misery and sorrow upon their posterity. 'A foolish son (saith Solomon) is the calamity of his father; and the contentions of the wife is a continual dropping.' Prov. xix. 13. Such a one, instead of 'a fruitful vine,' is rather a crabbed stock, to 'bring forth only wild or sour grapes;' and such children, instead of 'olive-plants about the table,' are only 'thorns in the side' of their parents, to 'pierce them through with many sorrows.' Whereas, 'a prudent wife (as the same wise man tells us) is from the Lord.' Prov. xix. 14. She is a 'help-meet,' and 'a crown of glory to her husband:' and good children are the grace and ornament of his table, the joy of his youth, and a prop to his old age: 'Lo! thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord, and walketh in his ways:' which blessings are entailed by promise on virtuous and religious parents; who, by their good example and education, lead them in the way that they should go; often saying with holy David, 'Little children, come and hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.' Now he is faithful that hath promised, and will surely perform it, where these conditions are fulfilled, according to the Psalmist's observation, who neither in his youth or age 'ever saw the righteous forsaken, or their seed begging their bread.' Psal. xxxvii. 25.

Thus we see the private blessings, annexed to a religious

deportment in the holy state of matrimony; the public blessings resulting from it, are set forth in the following words, saying, 'the Lord from out of Zion shall so bless thee, that thou shalt see Jerusalem in prosperity all thy life long.' Where by the prosperity of Jerusalem is meant, the peace and welfare of the Church; which as the piety and prayers of the people will tend much to promote, so shall they live to see the success of them, and be delighted with a happy prospect all the days of their life. The devout Psalmist bids us to 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem,' adding this encouragement, 'They shall prosper that love it:' and the love we are to bear to it is, by the apostle, likened to the love that Christ bears to 'his spouse the Church, who gave himself for it, to present it pure without spot or blemish.' And 'so (saith he) ought every man to love his wife,' to keep himself unspotted from the world; to which they are invited by the same promise of prosperity to themselves, and the whole Church: which blessing shall descend upon their family and posterity, for 'their seed shall be mighty upon earth, the generation of the righteous shall be blessed; wealth and riches shall be in his house, and his righteousness endureth for ever.' Psal. cxii. 1, 2, &c. To all which is added, in the close, a promise of long life, that 'they shall see their children's children, and peace upon Israel;' this is a great ingredient of earthly happiness to see their children's children, which the second commandment extends to the 'third and fourth generation of them that love God, and keep his commandments,' whom God will 'increase more and more, both them and their children:' which God grant, &c.

DISCOURSE CCCVIII.

THE ADDITION OF JOY TO THE MARRIED COUPLE.

PSAL. lxvii. 1, 2, to the end.—*God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and shew the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations*, &c.

THIS is another psalm allowed to be said or sung at this nuptial solemnity, to congratulate the marriage, and to send up our good wishes to make it happy, for the good of themselves and country. The psalm contains petitions and praises, suitable to so joyful an occasion, which will therefore deserve to be a little descanted upon: it begins with three general petitions, that may be particularly applied to the persons principally concerned in this solemnity.

The First whereof is for mercy, 'God be merciful unto us;' which for the absolute necessity we all have of it, at all times, and in all conditions, is here doubled in the same verse, 'and be merciful unto us.'

The Second is for the blessing of God in all our honest undertakings, God be merciful unto us, 'and bless us.'

The Third is for the Divine favour, expressed by the light of his countenance, 'and shew us the light of his countenance,' and again be merciful unto us; of each of which briefly, as they relate to the present couple. And,—

First, We pray God to 'be merciful unto them.' Mercy ever supposes misery, and is the best remedy and relief against it. Now because sin is in itself the greatest misery, and the cause of all other; the mercy we implore consists, chiefly in the forgiving of sin, in helping our infirmities, and healing all the maladies, both of body and soul. Without this we daily fall into sin, and run into all manner of dangers, from which nothing but the assistance of Divine grace and mercy can preserve us. And therefore we find holy David, almost in every Psalm, calling upon God for mercy; 'O be merciful unto me, O Lord, according to thy great goodness, and do away mine offences: wash me thoroughly from my sin, and according to the multitude of thy mercies blot out all my transgressions.' Psal. li. And 'O be gracious and merciful unto me,' is the burden of all the Psalms. In the New Testament, we find all sorts of persons following our Saviour, with 'Lord have mercy upon us;' and 'Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy upon us,' which they often repeated, and cried after him with a restless importunity: and he was so far from disliking it, that he called them unto him, granted their requests, and added a vantage blessing for their importunity. The poor publican in the gospel, smote upon his breast and said, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner,' and that was better accepted, than all the long prayers of the Pharisees.

This is the first petition of this hymn, appointed to be used on this occasion, viz. that God would 'be merciful unto us,' in the pardon of all our sins.

The Second is, for his blessing in all our lawful and honest undertakings; God be merciful unto us, 'and bless us.' It is the blessing of God that gives all the success to any thing that we set about, and without it nothing, that we take in hand, can prosper. 'Without me (saith Christ to his disciples) ye can do nothing.' We of ourselves are but feeble impotent creatures, unable either to begin, carry on, or finish any thing without the Divine aid and assistance; but with that, his grace is sufficient for us, and 'we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us.' This then is fitly implored in this office, in the behalf of all Christians in general, and more especially of those, who are newly joined together in the sacred bond of wedlock; that they may prosper in all honest ways, and be blessed in their deed.

Thirdly, The next petition offered up in their behalf, is for the Divine favour and goodness, expressed here by the light of God's countenance; and 'shew us the light of thy countenance,

and be merciful unto us.' And here I might enlarge upon the excellency and necessity, the benefit and comfort of the Divine favour, which is the greatest of all blessings, and includes all other in it. If God withdraw the light of his countenance, the world is all in clouds and thick darkness; but if he please to lift up the light of his countenance, and to shine forth, it is soon day and joy to the benighted world. And if the light of the sun be pleasant, how much more delightful is the light of God's countenance! The favour of princes is wont to be highly valued and courted, who yet are subject to chance and death, and sometimes unable to help themselves; but how much more desirable is the favour of the King of kings, and Lord of lords, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning! 'In his favour is life,' (saith the Psalmist, Psal. xxx. 5;) and elsewhere, 'His favour is better than life:' for life is a burden when Heaven frowns, and is embittered with sorrow and trouble, when the Divine favour and blessing is wanting. 'Thou hidest thy face, (saith holy David,) and I was troubled,' sorrow compassed my heart; 'but in a little time thou didst turn again and comfort me;' and, in a manner, restore me to life again.

And therefore, when the worldlings cried, 'Who will shew us any good?' his prayer was, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon me, and that will put more joy and gladness into my heart, than in the time that their corn, and wine, and oil increaseth.' Psal. iv. 6—8. Aaron, in blessing the Israelites, prayed God to 'make his face to shine upon them, and be gracious unto them; to lift up his countenance upon them, and to give them peace.' Numb. vi. 24, 25. The same petitions are here offered up in this psalm for all Christians, which are grounded upon many gracious promises, to encourage our hope for the good success of them: for though 'the face of the Lord be against them that do evil,' yet 'his ears are open to the prayers of the righteous.' And because the marriages of Christians, is the way to enlarge the bounds of the Church, and to propagate the gospel to all nations, it is added as a motive, in the next verse, for an answer to these prayers, 'that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health unto all nations;' which cannot be, without the generation and education of children. Lawful wedlock is God's ordinance, for the peopling and preserving the world, which else would be but *unius ætatis*, without any succession, or propagation of his Church: his way would be so far from being known upon earth, that there would be none to know it; and 'his saving health' would cease with the end and decay of 'all nations.' 'In Jewry was God known, (saith the Psalmist,) and his name was great in Israel:' and that was by the spreading of the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, 'in whom all the nations of the earth were promised to be blessed.' And because to them 'the multitude of the isles, and the gathering of the people should be;' they scattered the light of divine truths over

all the dark corners of the earth, by which the Gentiles also were led into the way of truth, and the heathens had the knowledge of his laws.

For these great and public blessings, the Psalmist, in the next words, calls upon all persons to sound forth the praises of their Maker, who hath called them into this state of salvation, saying, ver. 3, 'Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee.' Where he excites men to give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; and because all men partake of his bounty, and his goodness extends to the ends of the earth, he calls upon all to join herein, 'yea, let all the people praise him.' Among these the Church, by ordering this psalm to be used in the office of matrimony, invites the married couple to the praising of God, and to join together in propagating his Church, and promoting his glory. Indeed, praises and thanksgivings are a tribute due unto God for all the mercies we receive; but such signal and general mercies require a greater and more universal joy; which occasioned that fresh call to this purpose, 'O let the nations rejoice and be glad, for thou shalt judge the folk righteously, and govern the nations upon earth.' He that hath enlightened the world with the knowledge of his laws, will judge and govern the people according to them; which being all holy, just, and good, we need not fear any rigour or injustice, but may safely rely upon all the equity, candour, and clemency that we can reasonably desire: for which reason the exhortation is doubled and trebled in the following words, 'Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee.' 'Tell it out among the heathen, (saith David,) that the Lord is King, and that he will judge the people righteously;' and therefore would have the 'heavens to rejoice, and the earth to be glad thereof.' Psal. xcvi. 10.

For a farther encouragement hereunto, here are added, in the close, promises of earthly, as well as heavenly blessings, saying, ver. 6, 'Then shall the earth bring forth her increase, and God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing;' that is, he will multiply upon us all his mercies, both of the right and left hand. The earth, the fruitful mother of all vegetables, will plentifully yield her increase in all kinds, and liberally supply us with all the comforts, as well as necessaries of human life. The heavens from above, will send down liberal showers to water the earth, and thereby give us fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. If our praises ascend up to heaven, the Divine blessings will descend down upon earth, and that will make it fructify and abound in all manner of good things, and because it is the blessing of God that puts all the sweetness and comfort into them, it is added, that 'God, even our own God, shall give us his blessing.' The psalm concludes with a repeated assurance of the Divine benediction, together with the happy fruits and effects of it; 'God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth

shall fear him:' meaning, that we may safely rely upon the mercy and goodness of God in all conditions; and particularly married persons shall be blessed in their offspring and issue, which shall be so numerous and spreading, as to carry the name and knowledge of God throughout the world, and the ends of the earth shall live in the love and fear of him.

Thus we see the sense of this psalm, and how well it is applied and made use of upon this occasion: of which, see more in Volume the First, on the Morning and Evening Service, Discourse LV., p. 333, &c.

DISCOURSE CCCIX.

THE LORD'S PRAYER ON THIS OCCASION.

LUKE xi. 2. — *When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven*, &c.

THE psalms of praise and thanksgiving, suited to the joy of this solemnity, being ended, the Church calls the new-married couple again to their prayers; the priest leading them up to the Lord's table, and causing them to kneel before the altar, is ordered to turn his face towards them, and say the Lord's Prayer, with the versicles before and after it. Those going before it are the three Κύριε ἐλέεσονς, 'Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, Lord have mercy upon us,' which being thrice repeated, is a particular address to the three Persons in the holy Trinity; wherein we call upon God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, 'to have mercy upon us.' And justly too; for,—

First, We owe a particular homage and service to each of those Divine Persons, for the particular mercies we receive from them: we owe the mercy of our creation to God the Father, the mercy of our redemption to God the Son, the mercy of our sanctification to God the Holy Ghost. And as each of those mercies lay a particular debt of gratitude upon us that receive them, so are we to pay a particular duty and observance to each of the Persons that bestow them, which our Church hath taught us to do in this particular address to them. Again,—

Secondly, We have offended all the three Persons in the holy Trinity, and therefore we are to ask mercy and pardon of them all: we have offended God the Father, by our frequent transgressing his most holy and righteous laws; and so stand obliged to ask mercy and pardon at his hands: we have offended God the Son, by refusing the reasonable terms of life and salvation, which he at the dear price of his own blood hath purchased for us; and so have great need to beg mercy and forgiveness at his hands: we have offended God the Holy Ghost, by abusing his gifts, refusing its comforts, and stifling its good motions; and so have made it necessary to implore mercy and pardon for the 'despite thereby done to the Spirit of grace.'

Thirdly, We stand in need of the aid and assistance of all the three Persons of the Trinity to help our infirmities, to direct and protect us in all our ways: we need the favour of God the Father, to overlook our many failings and aberrations from his holy laws: we want the merits of God the Son, to make satisfaction and intercession for us: we want the counsel and comforts of the Holy Ghost, to bear us up under all the changes and chances of this mortal life. And because these invaluable mercies can come from no less than a Divine hand, we are taught to ask them by particular petitions to the three Persons in the Godhead, the sole authors and conferrers of them: so that the thrice repeating of this petition, 'Lord, have mercy upon us,' is not (as some have weakly objected) 'a vain repetition,' like those of the heathens and Pharisees, condemned by our Saviour in his Sermon on the Mount; but, if heartily and devoutly offered up, is a most pious and prevailing repetition: for we find our Saviour in the gospel, not only approving, but highly commending it on sundry occasions, and answering it with the desired success. The lepers, that followed him coming down from the Mount, and often crying to him, 'Lord, have mercy upon us;' and the two blind men in the gospel, who hearing of our Saviour's passing by, cried out, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us;' doubling and trebling it with earnestness and importunity, were heard and accepted by him, and healed of their leprosy and blindness. The Canaanitish woman, and many others, used the same petition, 'Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us;' which they repeated so often, that the 'disciples rebuked them,' and desired our Saviour 'to dismiss them, for they cried after him;' but Christ was so far from sending them away, that he 'called them to him,' commending their faith, granting their several requests, and healing their infirmities: all which plainly shews, that petitions for mercy, often reiterated, with faith and fervency, are no vain, but useful and successful repetitions. And therefore the Church requires here the new-married persons to join with the priest, in putting up these reiterated petitions for mercy, as the most effectual way of obtaining the Divine blessing, which will lay the best foundation that can be for the future happiness in that state.

Now these short petitions, or ejaculations for mercy, are used here and elsewhere in the Liturgy, to usher in and prepare for the Lord's Prayer; for without his pardoning mercy we cannot call God Father, nor take our Saviour's words into our mouths, with any hopes of being heard; but with it we are taught to cry 'Abba, Father,' and to go to him with the boldness of children, for the supply of all our wants.

This prayer, then, being of our blessed Saviour's own inditing, and consequently the most absolute, perfect, and comprehensive of all forms; and being, as for the author, so for the matter, the most excellent and most agreeable to the Divine will, is ordered

to be used in all the offices of the Church, according to Christ's own direction in the text, viz. 'When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven,' &c.; and, consequently, is not to be omitted in the office of matrimony, as containing matter suitable to that, as well as all other conditions of human life. And therefore the present couple are commanded to say, with the minister, 'Our Father, which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,' &c.: which divine form being before largely expounded in all its parts and petitions, in the Catechism, and other offices of the Liturgy, I shall here only descant upon it, with relation to the present occasion. And,—

First, The married persons are in the beginning taught to call God their 'Father,' and that, not by creation only, in which large sense he is said to be the 'God and Father of all;' but in a more straight and a nearer sense, as he created them male and female, and then joined them together in holy wedlock: for as he that giveth the woman to be married to the man, is commonly styled a father to her; so God, who gave Eve to Adam, and hath joined husband and wife ever since, may be more especially called a father; which loving title signifies, that he still bears a fatherly affection, care, and tenderness towards them, and that they should ever retain a filial love, duty, and obedience towards him. And because that title is used to him, not with relation to them only, but in common with others in the same state, therefore they are farther taught to address to him in the common appellation of 'Our Father;' to mind us, not to confine our prayers to ourselves only, but to extend them to all others; loving our neighbours as ourselves, and tendering their good and welfare as our own, by taking them within the compass of their devotion and charity, which is implied in the common compellation of 'Our Father.' Moreover, he is here addressed to in the style of our heavenly Father, or our Father, 'which art in heaven;' to signify the greatness and immensity of his power and goodness, that he hath 'all power in heaven and earth,' and 'can do whatsoever pleases him in both;' that, 'as high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are his compassions above ours,' and his power above all earthly parents: for whereas these are many times ignorant and impotent, unable to know our wants, or to relieve their own, God is omnipresent and omniscient, and so 'knows our necessities before we ask,' and is 'able to give more than we can ask or think.' This for the preface of this divine prayer, the petitions follow.

The First whereof is, 'Hallowed be thy name;' where we pray, that the name of God, that is, his titles, attributes, his word and works, together with all things denominated by, or belonging to, him, may be always had in due reverence and estimation; that they may be sanctified, and accounted as things sacred, and separate from those of the same kind, and made 'holy unto the Lord,' so as not to prostitute or pollute them by any profane words or actions, or use them as things common or

unholy. This petition the present pair should put up, that their issue may be in the number of those that hallow the name of God; and others, by their offspring, may 'daily add to his church such as shall be saved.'

The Second petition is, 'Thy kingdom come:' here we pray for the enlarging of Christ's kingdom, and propagating his church to the ends of the world, 'that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.' And because matrimony conduces much to this good end, by enlarging the bounds of God's kingdom, and propagating the faith, not only in their own country, but to the remoter parts of the earth; therefore all persons, in that state, should readily join in this petition, that they may beget and breed up such children, as may in some measure answer this great end; and thereby increase the number of heirs to Christ's kingdom of grace here, and inheritors of his kingdom of glory hereafter.

The Third petition is, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;' that is, as the angels and glorified saints in heaven do the will of God readily, without delay; sincerely, without hypocrisy; thoroughly, without partiality; unanimously, without discord or division; and constantly, without weariness or apostasy: so all Christians upon earth may learn to imitate so great an example, and in like manner to serve and obey their Maker; and though they cannot come up to the high pitch and perfection of their obedience to the Divine will, yet to come as near it as they can, and to teach their children to do the same. These petitions relate to God and his glory; the rest that follow relate to ourselves. As,—

First, 'Give us this day our daily bread;' that is, so bless the labour of our hands, that by an honest diligence and industry in our callings, we may earn and eat our own bread; and that, not for one day only, but every day so to depend upon the Divine Providence, that in the use of all good means, we may day by day successively and successfully do the same. And because married persons have more to provide for than others, they are to double their diligence and devotion for food and raiment, and other necessaries of human life, that they may lead quiet and comfortable lives, in all godliness and honesty.

The next petition is, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Without the pardon of our sins our daily bread can afford no relish or relief to us; and therefore we are to prefer his pardoning grace above, and before our appointed food: this is what we ask in this petition, that God would forgive us all our sins of omission and commission, both voluntary and involuntary; all the follies and extravagancies of our youth, and the more deliberate and darling vices of elder years, which are all trespasses committed against God, together with all wrongful dealings towards men; all which we desire God to 'forgive' to us, 'as we forgive those that trespass against

us.' Where we suspend God's pardoning of our offences, upon the condition of our passing by the offences of others; so that, 'if we forgive not our neighbour his trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive ours.'

The last petition of this divine prayer is, 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;' where we pray God, not to suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but so to strengthen us with his grace, that we may avoid or overcome all the temptations of the devil, the world, and the flesh; and to that end, that we may put on the whole armour of God, to enable us to stand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Finally we pray, to be 'delivered from all evil,' both of sin and punishment, and more especially from the 'evil one,' the author and cause of both.

This excellent form of prayer is here commanded to be used at all times, and by all Christians; and therefore is not to be omitted on this great occasion, when the wedded couple, by joining together in the Lord's prayer, may fasten the bond of wedlock firmer upon them, and make their marriage to 'be in the Lord:' to which the Church hath added some versicles, or short ejaculations for that purpose.

As, First, 'O Lord, save thy servant, and thy hand-maid, who put their trust in thee.' This is David's prayer, Psal. lxxxvi. 2. 'Preserve thou my soul, for I am holy; my God, save thy servant that putteth his trust in thee:' where there is a petition, and that is, to save these persons, both in soul and body. And a motive to enforce it, because they put their trust in God, who never faileth them, that in the use of means rely upon him: and because all worldly comforts may, and often do fail us, and disappoint all the hopes and expectations founded upon them, therefore we pray in their behalf,—

Secondly, 'O Lord, send them help from thy holy place, and evermore defend them.' The help that cometh from above is sure and steadfast, abundantly able to answer the needs and infirmities of body and soul, of which we find a promise in Psalm cxxviii. 6, 'God shall bless his people out of Zion;' accordingly the Psalmist prays in their behalf, 'The Lord send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.' Psalm xx. 2. Which in the next versicle is thus expressed, 'Be unto them a tower of strength against the face of their enemies.' This is taken out of sundry places in the Psalms, where God is often styled a strong tower of defence, or castle, whereunto we may always resort, in all times of difficulty and danger. And lastly, concludes with that general petition, 'O Lord, hear our prayer, and let our cry come unto thee.' This is a petition often put up by David in the Book of Psalms, and is therefore often used by the Church in the public prayers; and is such an affectionate and importunate address to our Maker that seldom fails of a gracious answer, and so may not be omitted upon this solemn occasion.

DISCOURSE CCCX.

THE PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS.

GEN. xii. 3, the latter part.—*In Thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

AFTER the Lord's prayer, which is commanded to be used in this, as in all other offices of the Church, there follow three prayers agreeable to it; the First for spiritual, the Second for temporal blessings, the Third for accomplishing the ends, and performing the duties of marriage; all which being suited to this occasion, must be particularly spoken to. And I begin with the—

First, Which is a prayer for spiritual blessings, to be conferred on the newly-joined couple, in these words: 'O God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, bless these thy servants, and sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts, that whatsoever in thy holy word they shall profitably learn, they may indeed fulfil the same: look, O Lord, mercifully from heaven upon them,' &c. Where we may note,—

First, The title or attributes by which God is invoked.

Secondly, The mercy and blessing implored of him.

Thirdly, The end for which it is asked.

For the First, The titles here given unto God, by which he is invocated, are 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Which titles God Almighty was pleased to give to himself, saying to Moses, Exod. iii. 6, 'I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' This is his name for ever, and this is his memorial unto all generations.' And by this title of his, our Saviour proved to the Sadducees the truth of the resurrection; for God being the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, who were then dead, he inferred from thence, that they were to live again, 'For God is not the God of the dead but of the living.' Matt. xxii. 32. Now, God styles himself the God of those patriarchs, because they were the first fathers and heads of many nations, the founders and planters of the Church, which first sprung from their seed, and hath been ever since preserved and propagated by their offspring. These were 'the fathers, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, and in whom all the nations of the earth were promised to be blessed.'

Abraham is called in Scripture, 'the father of the faithful;' and all that believe in Christ were from him styled the sons, or the seed of Abraham, and so they are still, who embrace, and tread in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham; so that God's calling himself the God of Abraham, signifies that all that descend from him, and imitate his faith, are God's children, and that he is a God in covenant with all his posterity. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah by promise, with whom God 'established his covenant for an everlasting covenant, and with

his seed after him.' Gen. xvii. 19. And likewise promised, that 'in Isaac should his seed be called.' Gen. xxi. 12. Jacob was the son of Isaac, and the father of all the tribes of Israel, who were therefore called Israelites, or the Israel of God, with whom he renewed the same covenant, promising to be 'their God, and they to be his people.' So that the Almighty's styling himself the God of those three patriarchs, from whom the heirs of the promise are descended, entitles them to, and encourages them to ask the benefits and blessings of the covenant, 'made with our forefather Abraham and his seed for ever.' And this will lead me to consider,—

Secondly, The mercies here implored or prayed for; and they are in the next words, viz. to 'Bless these his servants,' meaning, the present couple; 'and to sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts.' These are spiritual and divine blessings, purchased for us by the merits of Christ, and bestowed only by his mediation: the one consists in the pardon of sins, the other in the blessings of eternal life; and both the greatest gifts that God can bestow, and that we can receive. Of which therefore something briefly.

And First, we pray God to bless these his servants with the forgiveness of sins; this was one condition of the covenant made with our forefathers, wherein God promised to 'blot out their iniquities, and to remember their sins no more.' The Psalmist pronounces them truly 'blessed, whose unrighteousness is forgiven, and whose sins are covered.' And again, 'Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin.' Psal. xxxii. 1, 2. Indeed, it is sin only that separates between God and us, and withholds good things from us; and when that is removed, by God's pardoning mercy, we may draw nigh to him, with the boldness of children to their heavenly Father, who is ever ready to receive us, and will withhold no good thing from them that ask it. In short, the covenant made with our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their seed was, that 'God would be their God, and they should be his people:' and 'blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God.' This is one thing we pray for here in the behalf of the new-married couple, viz. that God would receive them into the number of his people, and treat them as his children and servants, by blessing and prospering them in all their lawful undertakings.

The next is, 'to sow the seed of eternal life in their hearts.' 'Eternal life' is the great blessing promised in the foresaid covenant, made with our forefathers, which being but obscurely revealed in the Old Testament, under the type of long life, and happy days in the good land of Canaan; is yet more plainly and expressly discovered in the New, where 'life and immortality are brought into a clearer light by the gospel.' And this being the top of our most elevated wishes and desires, ought to be sought and laboured for before, and above all earthly felicities. Now, 'the seed' of eternal life, is either the graces of God's Holy Spirit,

which differ from glory, not in kind, but only in degree; for grace is the beginning, or minority of glory; and glory is the perfection, or maturity of grace, according to that expression of the apostle, 'from glory to glory,' that is, from the lower to the higher degrees of glory, or from grace to glory: and this is called 'the seed of eternal life,' because it grows up into it, and being an immortal seed, it springs up into immortality.

The thing then that we here ask for the present pair, is, that the seeds of divine grace may be sown in their hearts, that they may be fruitful in all good works, which will follow and crown them with endless glory; and 'having their fruit unto holiness, they may in the end reap everlasting life.' Or else,—

Secondly, By the 'seed of eternal life,' we may understand the 'seed of God's word,' which is often so styled in holy Scripture, because it produces the fruits of a holy and happy life, which grow up into immortality. The apostles call it the words of eternal life, saying to our Saviour, 'Lord, thou only hast the words of eternal life;' meaning, that his word alone can direct and lead us to everlasting glory. Now this word, or spiritual seed, must be sown, not in the ear only, by hearing of it; but in the heart, by loving, receiving, and following its directions. It must be received first into the head, by knowing and right understanding of it, and then take root in the heart, by bringing forth the good fruits of a holy life and conversation; and this will make it that 'engrafted word,' mentioned by St. James, 'that is able to save our souls.' chap. i. 21. Or that 'incorruptible seed of God's word,' spoken of by St. Peter, by which 'we are born again, and made to live and abide for ever.' 1 Pet. i. 23. And this is what we here pray for, in the behalf of the persons newly joined together in wedlock; viz. that the good seed of God's word may not be cast away upon them, but be entertained in honest and good hearts, and bring forth the good fruits of godliness and virtue in their conversation, that they may grow up to everlasting life. To which end it is farther added, 'that whatsoever in God's holy word they shall profitably learn, they may indeed fulfil the same;' that is, that they may be 'doers of the word, and not hearers only,' deceiving their own and others souls; but by doing what is profitable to both, 'they may be blessed in their deed:' for a profession of religion, without practice, is but a vain empty thing; to fulfil it, is to join doing with hearing, which alone can answer and accomplish the ends of both.

These things are farther enlarged and enforced in the following petitions of this excellent prayer, the First whereof is in the next words: 'Look, O Lord, mercifully from heaven upon them, and bless them.' This is a frequent petition in the book of God, upon all occasions of joy and sorrow; that God would look down from heaven, and bless his people with the continuance and increase of the one, and with the removal, or lessening of the other, that their joys may abound, and be full; and that their sorrows may be few, and be done away: the prophet Isaiah prayed

thus in the behalf of the Israelites: 'Lord! look down from heaven, and behold them from the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory.' Isa. lxiii. 15. And David in the behalf of the Church, 'Look down, behold and visit this vine, which thine own right hand hath planted.' Psal. lxxx. 14. And here we pray in the behalf of these persons; 'Look mercifully, O Lord, from heaven upon them, and bless them:' adding something of the manner of it, 'that as thou didst bless Abraham and Sarah, to their great comfort, so vouchsafe to send thy blessing upon these thy servants.' Abraham and Sarah were a blessed couple, blest not only in their own persons and family, but in all the families of the earth, who were blessed in them: for from their stock the Messias, or Saviour of the world, descended; 'whose day Abraham was said to see afar off, and rejoiced' in the happy sight; and whose birth was matter of joy unto all people; for he brought life and immortality to those, who were before doomed to eternal death and darkness. And when the fulness of the time came, being born of a woman, he brought fulness of joy to lost man, who was then in the depth of misery and sorrow, and raised him up to the height of glory and felicity.

This happy pair are here mentioned as an instance of God's mercy and goodness; and because his power and goodness is still the same, our Church begs him to extend it to the present couple, to be merciful to these, as he was to them, and to bless them, though not in the same, yet in like manner. To the end, as the following words declare, 'that they obeying God's will, and always being in safety under his protection, may abide in his love to their lives' end, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Where we beseech God,—

First, To give these persons grace, to 'live in obedience to his will,' to walk in his ways, and not to wander out of the paths of his commandments; and in so doing, we beg him,—

Secondly, To take them 'under the wing of his protection,' to preserve them from all sin and danger, and to keep them in perpetual peace and safety. And by these means we farther pray, 'that they may abide in God's love to their lives' end;' which they may easily do, if they abide in their love to one another: for God's love is styled, and found to be 'an everlasting love;' and 'whom he loveth, he loveth to the end.' Not like the fickle and inconstant love of vain mortals, that comes and goes again by fits and starts, sometimes seeming all in a flame of ardent desires and affection; and by and by the fire all goes out, and sinks into hatred and dislike: and their hearts, like Nabal's, 'are as cold as a stone.' But God's love is more permanent and lasting, and none that persist in their love and obedience to him, can ever fail of or fall from it. And what better things can we ask, or desire for any christian couple, than those contained in these petitions? which we therefore put up, not in our own name, or for our own sake, but in the name, and for the merits of Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE CCCXI.

THE PRAYER FOR CHILDREN.

GEN. i. 28. — *And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,* &c.

FROM the spiritual blessings of grace and glory, asked in the foregoing prayer, I proceed to the temporal blessings and comforts of children, interceded for in the next, which is in these words: 'O merciful Lord, and heavenly Father, by whose gracious gift mankind is increased; we beseech thee, assist with thy blessing these two persons, that they may both be fruitful in procreation of children, and also live together so long in godly love and honesty, that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up, to thy praise and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Of which I shall treat from the words read, 'God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.' The words contain the first and great end of marriage, which was the peopling of the world, and the propagation of mankind; for God Almighty first gave Adam and Eve a being, and then a blessing, with a command for that purpose. In the verses, immediately before the text, we read with how much greater solemnity God Almighty made man than all, or any other of the creatures: for, whereas he spake all the rest into being, with a word of his mouth, he seems to assemble the whole Trinity, and as it were to enter into counsel upon the making of man, whom he designed for the masterpiece of the creation, and the viceroy of the world, saying, 'Come, let us make man in our own image, and after our own likeness; and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowls of the air, over the cattle, and over every living thing that creepeth upon the face of the earth.' And having thus stamped his own image upon him, he made him male and female: but though he distinguished them into more persons and sexes, yet he soon joined them together, and of twain made them one flesh, with this additional charge, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.' In discoursing whereof, with relation to the prayer, I shall observe,—

First, That it is of God's gracious gift and blessing that mankind is increased, and the earth replenished: this is implied in the text, and more plainly expressed in the prayer.

Secondly, That we are to beg God's blessing and assistance for the accomplishing of this end, by the procreation of children.

Thirdly, That we are to pray to God for the life of parents, that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up. And,—

Lastly, That these things tend to the praise and honour of God: of which something particularly, in their order. And,—

First, We learn here, that it is of God's gracious gift that mankind is increased, and the earth replenished: so the Psalmist plainly tells us, 'Lo! children and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift, that cometh of the Lord.' Psal. cxxvii. 4. And elsewhere, 'It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' We can no more continue, than at first give ourselves a being; and were it not for God's conserving providence, the world would have had an end, almost as soon as it had a beginning. The fruitfulness of the womb, as well as that of the earth, cometh from the Lord, and both are entirely owing to his blessing; for 'though Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; yet it is God only that gives the increase.' He can make 'a fruitful land barren, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.' And he can make 'a barren woman,' that calls and depends upon him, 'to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.' The Jewish writers tell us of three keys, that God hath reserved in his own keeping, and never entrusted them into the hands of any other; and they are the key of the clouds, the key of the grave, and the key of the womb: all which he opens and shuts at pleasure, which none can do beside him.

He keeps the key of the clouds, by giving or withholding of rain, as he thinks fit; sometimes opening the windows of heaven, and making the clouds to drop fatness; and at other times, shutting up the doors of the clouds, making the heavens iron, and the earth brass, and thereby sending leanness and sadness into the soul.

He keeps the key of the grave, by putting in and letting out whom he pleases, for which he is said to 'have the keys of death and hell.' Rev. i. 18.

He keeps the key of the womb, by making it fruitful or barren as he will, blessing some with a numerous issue, and letting others go childless: so that children, where they are, are the blessings and gifts of God; so Jacob styles them, 'I and the children which God had graciously given unto his servant.' Gen. xxxiii. 5. And another speaks in the same manner, 'and the children that God hath given me.' Isa. viii. 18. It is by these that the world is continued, and the species of mankind preserved, which else would necessarily fail without issue; whereas now children succeed in the place of their parents, and supply the defect of their mortality, and go on to do so from generation to generation. This, then, being the way of propagating mankind, and replenishing the earth with a lawful issue, our Church here directs,—

Secondly, To pray for blessing and assisting the present couple, 'that they both may be fruitful in the procreation of children.' This we find was the practice of good men and women in holy Scripture. Hannah prayed so earnestly, with tears and fasting, for a man-child, that her husband seemed both to check and comfort her, saying, 'Am I not better to thee than ten sons?'

However, she desisted not her suit, till she prevailed and obtained a son, as we read, 1 Sam. i. 9—11. Rachel cried perhaps too importunately for children, saying, 'Give me children, or else I die;' which moved Jacob's anger, saying unto her, 'Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?' Gen. xxx. 12.

However, in all the offices of marriage, no petition is more frequent, than this for bearing and bringing forth children. Rebekah's friends, at their sending her to Isaac, blessed her and said unto her, 'Be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of their enemies.' Gen. xxiv. 60. And such was the prayer for Boaz and Ruth, that by their fruitfulness they might enlarge the bounds of their families, and the borders of the earth. Ruth iv. 11, 12. And from God Almighty's charge in the text, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth,' all liturgies, in joining persons together in wedlock, abound with petitions to that purpose. But because the bringing of children into the world, without bringing them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, is rather a misery than felicity to them; and because the death of parents often leave children to the wide world, without any care or instruction of them; therefore the Church teaches us farther to pray, that the persons now joined 'may live together so long in godly love and honesty, that they may see their children christianly and virtuously brought up.'

Where, by bringing them up christianly, is meant, the bringing them by baptism into the christian Church, by which they become the members of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. It is to instruct them betimes in the christian faith, and instil into them the sound principles of religion; without which they will be bred up like brutes, or heathens, destitute of all saving knowledge of God or Christ, exposed to all the craft of seducers, to lead them into all manner of errors and divisions, and liable to be carried about with every wind of doctrine.

To bring up children 'virtuously,' is to help them to grow in grace and goodness, and in all the gifts and fruits of God's Holy Spirit, to lead holy and virtuous lives; and to be so firmly rooted and grounded in love and other virtues, as to make them appear after in a godly conversation, without which they must fall into atheism, looseness, and all manner of debaucheries; to prevent those evils, we pray God so to prolong the lives of parents, that by their examples, in living in godly love and honesty, they may see their children in some measure do the same in their life-time. Indeed,—

The good education of children is a matter that tends so much to the comfort of parents, to the benefit of their issue, and to the welfare of the public, that no possible pains, care, or cost may be thought too much to be laid out for that purpose. Great substance and good estates, without education, seldom or never answer the ends expected from those that have them; whereas

little or nothing left, with learning and virtue, secure from want, and seldom fail of rise and advancement in the world. Hence we read of Alexander, that he owned himself more indebted to Aristotle, his tutor, than to king Philip, his father; for he received his being from the latter, but his well-being from the former. The education of children is of so great importance, that we find it inculcated by many precepts and examples in holy Scripture.

In the Old Testament, God commanded the Israelites to 'teach their children the God of their fathers, and to remember the wonderful things that he had done for them.' Psal. lxxviii. And of Abraham he saith, 'I know that he will command his children, and his seed after him, to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.' Gen. xviii. 29. Solomon directs parents to 'train up their children in the way that they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it.' Prov. xxii. 6. In the New Testament, they are required to instruct their children, and to 'bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Eph. vi. 4. St. Luke confirms Theophilus in the certainty of those things, 'wherein he had been instructed.' Luke i. 4. And St. Paul commends Timothy, 'that from a child he had learnt and known the holy Scriptures.' 2 Tim. iii. 15. And many more places might be produced, to shew the necessity of this duty: so that the parent's work is not over, or ended with the procreation of children, but must go on to finish it, by a timely and pious education; they must bring them to baptism, to be born again by spiritual regeneration, or else it had been better for them not to have been born: for they bring into the world with them the guilt of sin, derived from our first parents, which must be washed away by the waters of baptism; beside a great averseness to good, and strong propensities to evil, which must be corrected by education, or else they will increase to more ungodliness, and so from children of wrath and disobedience, they will become heirs of hell and damnation: whereas by training them up betimes in holiness and virtue, they may be made the children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; which will bring glory to God, and honour to themselves and their posterity. And this will lead me to the

Last thing propounded, viz. That a 'christian and virtuous bringing up of children' will redound to the 'praise and honour of God,' as well as their own salvation. The glory of God is the great end of our creation; and as he ever propounds it to himself, so ought we to make it the end and scope of all our actions: 'Whether ye eat or drink, (saith the apostle,) do all to the praise and glory of God.' 1 Cor. x. But this is most chiefly done by our holy and religious actions, from which God reaps the greatest harvest of glory: 'Whoso offereth me praise, (saith he,) he honoureth me; and to him that orders his conversation aright, will I shew the salvation of God.' Psal. l. Particularly, God is

honoured by those marriages, from which good and virtuous children spring; for these not only replenish the earth, but heaven; they increase the number of saints, enlarge the kingdom of Christ, and add to the heirs of glory: 'Herein is my Father glorified,' in bringing forth such good fruit, which grows up unto holiness, and in the end to everlasting life: such matches bring glory, both to God and themselves. 'The woman, though first in the transgression, is yet promised to be saved in child-bearing, if she continue in the faith.' 1 Tim. ii. 15. And the man, though deceived by her, shall be saved in child-breeding, if he 'bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord, and to the praise of his holy name.'

In short, a wise son, well educated, is a glory and stay to his father; but a foolish son, void of instruction, is a grief and shame to him. 'Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquity,' made their father Jacob's 'name to stink among the inhabitants of the land;' whereas Joseph's chastity, and other virtues, hath made him memorable to all generations. In like manner, a wicked life dishonours our heavenly Father, and blasphemes his holy name; but a virtuous well-led life brings honour and glory to him. Of this all parents should be ever mindful in the education of their children; that as they received them at God's hand, so they should willingly return, and dedicate them to Him that gave them; and as they bring them into this world, a place of misery and trouble; so they should endeavour to fit and prepare them for a better, where they may live in joy and happiness for evermore; which is a blessing fit to be asked only in the prevailing name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCOURSE CCCXII.

THE ENDS OF MATRIMONY.

EPHES. v. 25.—*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it: that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the Word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

I COME now to the last prayer in this office of matrimony, which contains a brief recapitulation, or summing up of the whole; together with petitions and requests suitable thereunto.

It begins with a preface, or preamble, in these words: 'O God, who by thy mighty power hast made all things out of nothing, who also after other things set in order, didst appoint that out of man, created after thine own image or similitude, woman should take her beginning; and knitting them together didst teach, that it never should be lawful to put asunder those

whom thou by matrimony hast made one:' where many things are premised worthy our remembrance and observation. As,

First, We recognise God's infinite power, in the creation of the world, 'Who by his Almighty Word spake all things into being, and made them all out of nothing.' This is frequently asserted in holy Scripture; 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' Gen. i. 1, which is extended by the Apostle to 'all things in it, both visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him.' Col. i. 16. Now creation is the making of things out of nothing, and differs from generation and all other ways of production in this, that these require some matter, or subject to work upon, and so belong only to natural and finite agents, who cannot make any thing out of nothing: whereas creation supposes no such preceding matter or subject in its operation, but can work as well without as with it; and this is peculiar only to an infinite and almighty Being, who alone can work upon nothing, and 'call things that were not as though they were,' making 'things that are seen' to arise out of 'those that did not appear.'

Secondly, We recollect the wisdom of God, in setting all things in the creation in such an admirable frame and order; where the first rude and unformed chaos was brought up by a divine hand into an excellent, regular, orderly fabric; each creature depending upon one another, and all upon him. Hence we read, that he made all things 'in number, weight, and measure,' which made the Psalmist cry out, 'How manifold are thy works, O Lord, in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches!' Psal. civ. 24. And elsewhere, 'O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world?' Psal. viii.

Thirdly, We commemorate here the infinite goodness of God, in 'creating man after his own image and similitude; for God intending him for the glory of his creation, and the viceroy of the universe, stamped him with his own image, and gave him the command of all his other creatures; which image consisted, not in the figure of his body, for God, being immaterial and invisible, can have no corporeal likeness, or resemblance, made of him; but in the endowments of his mind, consisting in 'knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness,' as we read, Eph. iv. 23, and Col. iii. 10.

But of all the wonders of his power, wisdom, and goodness, that of the woman's taking her beginning out of man, is here recited as none of the least; for God (as one hath truly observed) could as easily have created woman distinctly, without taking a part from any other, as he did man; but to make these nearer and dearer to one another, he took the woman out of the man, and made her of his own flesh and bones; the account whereof we have in Gen. ii. 21—23, where we read, that 'God caused a deep sleep to seize upon Adam,' and in that profound

rest, 'took out one of his ribs, closing up the flesh instead thereof;' and 'of that rib made the woman, and brought her to the man;' upon the sight whereof, Adam, as if he had been inspired in his sleep, or felt the anatomy, presently said, 'This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh,' and thereupon declared, that 'she should be called woman, because she was taken out of man.' God made them two, that he might make them one again, and so united them by the bond of matrimony, that of twain they became one flesh; therefore, as the next words tell us, 'a man shall leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.' And being thus closely 'knit together' by God, he hath made it 'unlawful for any man to put asunder those, whom he by matrimony hath made one.'

So that the first match that ever was, was of God Almighty's own making; for he framed the first woman out of a part of the first man, and then brought her to him; and having taken Eve out of Adam's side, he laid her down by him, blessing the fruit of her womb, and bidding them to 'increase and multiply, and replenish the earth.'

From this first match is the whole race of mankind descended; for Adam was the 'father of us all, and Eve the mother of all living;' which shews all men to be equal in blood, antiquity, and extraction: the prince and the beggar sprang from the same stock, and the meanest person may vie antiquity with the greatest monarch; which may check the pride and vanity of boasting of families, and teach men more humility and humanity, than to despise any of their fellow-creatures.

Moreover, the preface of this prayer minds us of 'God's consecrating the state of matrimony to such an excellent mystery, that in it is signified and represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and his Church.' Of all unions and marriages, there is none so high and noble as that of Christ's with the Church; not only for the greatness of the parties joined, but for the blessed influences and effects that proceed from it; and it makes much for the honour of matrimony, to be made a sign or resemblance of such an excellent mystery. Which things are a good ground of hope and confidence in God, for obtaining the following petitions; the next thing to be considered and spoken to. And here,—

First, From the foregoing considerations of the original honour and holiness of matrimony, we are taught to pray God 'to look mercifully upon these his servants,' now coupled together, and 'to lift up the light of his countenance upon them;' that by the help of the Divine grace and favour, they may live happily and comfortably together. But this petition being before explained in the 310th Discourse, I shall add no more here, but refer to it; and proceed to the more particular petitions, that relate both to the man and the woman.

The First whereof relates to the man, viz. 'To love his wife

according to God's word;' that is, with an entire and conjugal affection, 'as Christ did love his spouse the Church, who gave himself for it, loving and cherishing it, even as his own flesh.' Now, love is that passion of the soul, that inclines it to unite with a beloved object: its two principal acts and properties are, —a desire to please, and a desire to enjoy. He that truly loves another, will be ever ready to do him all good offices, and will carefully shun all that is any way injurious, or distasteful to him. Now, this should be most eminently seen in the husband's loving his wife; to whom love will oblige him to do things grateful and pleasing, and to avoid all things that may justly displease or offend. Again, he that truly loves his friend will covet his company, and delight in his conversation, and be ready to communicate with him in all good things. This the husband should more especially do towards his wife, taking pleasure in her society, in enjoying her person, and making her a sharer in all his comforts.

But our text gives us a higher pattern and measure of husbands loving their wives; and that is, of 'Christ's loving his spouse the Church, who gave himself for it, loving and cherishing it even as his own flesh.' Christ loved his spouse the Church with the dearest and most superlative love; for he gave himself, and laid down his life for it; and 'greater love than this hath no man, than to lay down his life for his friend.' And yet this Christ vouchsafed to his Church, shedding his own blood to sanctify and cleanse it from all impurities; washing it in the waters of baptism, and purifying it with his word, 'that he might present it a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and holy without blemish.' This noble instance of love is here made the pattern of conjugal affection, and is here prayed for on the man's part.

On the woman's part it is, that 'she may be loving and amiable, faithful and obedient to her husband; and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace, be a follower of all holy and godly matrons.' Where we ask for her God's grace, that she may be, First, 'a loving wife;' returning the same, or greater affection, to her husband, than that which she receives from him; for that will endear and draw his love to her, and firmly root and fix it in the hearts of both: for *magnes amoris amor*, love is the loadstone of love, and is a duty on both sides.

Secondly, That she may 'be amiable;' that is, lovely and pleasing in her conversation, kind and courteous in her words, affable and obliging in her behaviour, having her soul inwardly adorned with grace and virtue, and her body outwardly decked with decent and comely attire; that she may be a pleasing prospect in the eyes of her husband, without any sourness or sullenness of temper, or any moroseness or churlishness in words or actions, which are very distasteful, and create great uneasiness. And therefore Plutarch tells us, that in the wedding sacrifices

offered to Juno, 'the gall of the sacrifices was always taken out and cast away,' to signify that there should be no bitterness or anger remaining between those who were joined together in marriage. Moreover, we pray,—

Thirdly, That she may 'be faithful' to her husband, not only to his bed by conjugal chastity, but to his interest by prudence and frugality; studying more to increase than lessen his substance, not impairing or embezzling his goods, nor any ways alienating or disposing of any thing without his knowledge and consent; but to be true to him in all things, without wasting or hiding any thing from him; endeavouring at all times to promote his good, to preserve his credit, and to advance his interest, which is or ought to be all one with her own.

Fourthly, We pray that she may 'be obedient to her husband.' Obedience is a word that sounds harsh in the ears of many females, though it be a duty which the commands of God, and their own solemn vows and promises, as well as their own weakness, have imposed upon them; the neglect whereof will draw the displeasure of Heaven, together with the frowns of the husband, upon them; and therefore they were better learn and practise this lesson with cheerfulness, than to be driven to it by compulsion; and to do that from a sense of duty, which they will otherwise be forced to do by necessity. The former will make the yoke easy, and the service perfect freedom; the latter will make the burden heavy, and turn a delightsome service into a base and slavish servility; so that to obey is as much the wife's interest as duty, for she will gain more by a free and willing submission, than she can ever hope for by a foolish and struggling opposition.

Lastly, We pray for the present couple, and others in the married state, that they may imitate the virtues and good works of those holy men and women that have gone before them, and 'be followers of godly matrons,' who have left behind them excellent examples of conjugal love and piety: such as were Sarah and Rebekah, Rachel and Elizabeth, and many others, who have been admirable patterns and precedents of those good qualities that adorn the sex, and preserve the honour of matrimony: and particularly of the virtues here mentioned, viz. Of 'quietness' in families, without any domestic brawls and contentions. Of 'sobriety' and temperance, without the excesses of drunkenness, or any other abuses of God's creatures. And likewise of 'peaceableness' with neighbours, without any disturbance of the public or private tranquillity. These we should set before us as copies to write after, and to transcribe their virtues into our own lives and conversations: and so by treading in the steps of their excellent examples, we shall find the same earthly blessings with them here, and follow them hereafter to the same kingdom in heaven.

Here our Church concludes this useful and excellent office

with a final benediction, in these words: 'Almighty God, who at the beginning didst create our first parents, Adam and Eve, and didst sanctify and join them together in marriage; pour upon you the riches of his grace, sanctify and bless you, that ye may please him both in body and soul, and live together in holy love unto your lives' end. Amen.' Which being much the same, in every particular, with the foregoing blessings, I shall not need to insist any farther upon it, but refer the reader to them.

After which, if there be no sermon declaring the duties of man and wife, the minister is ordered to read the exhortation that followeth for that purpose; which being of great use in the whole course of a married life, shall be the subject of the next and last Discourse.

DISCOURSE CCCXIII.

THE DUTIES OF MATRIMONY.

EPHES. v. the last verse. —*Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife as himself; and let the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

HAVING gone through all the parts of this office of matrimony, nothing remains but to consider the exhortation annexed to it; wherein all that are married, or that intend to take the holy estate of matrimony upon them, are called upon to hear what the holy Scripture says, touching the duty of husbands towards their wives, and wives towards their husbands. Both which are briefly summed up and comprised in the first and great duty of love, which is the only cement of hearts, and what can alone unite and keep husband and wife together. Of this, therefore, it will be necessary to treat with relation to both, which I shall do from these words: 'Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular, so love his wife as himself; and let the wife see that she reverence her husband.' Where the apostle seems to speak to every one in particular in that state, summing up the whole of the man's duty in 'loving his wife,' which will include and draw on all other: and the woman's in 'reverencing her husband,' which will comprise and fulfil all the laws of matrimony; both which being comprehensive words, must be a little unfolded, or explained. And,—

First, The man's duty is summed up in love, 'Let the man so love his wife, even as himself.' This is the prime article in the marriage vow, and the most essential requisite to make it happy, and therefore is the first text cited in the exhortation, from Eph. v. 25. 'Husbands, love your wives,' &c. which being discoursed of in my last, I shall here only observe the pattern prescribed for it; and that is, 'as Christ loved his spouse the Church,' &c. And,—

Secondly, The manner or measure of the man's loving his wife, and that is, 'even as himself.' Both which will render it a

most dear and entire affection; and will kindle such a fire in the breast, that like the vestal flames will never go out.

For the pattern: There never was, or can be greater love manifested, than Christ hath shewed to his spouse the Church, for 'he gave himself for it;' the highest thing that could be given: and shed his own blood, to spare and save hers; and to wash and purify it from all pollution, that he might present it beautiful and glorious in the eyes of his Father; which made one of the apostles to cry out, 'O the height and depth, and breadth and length of the love of God, that passeth knowledge!' And another, like one astonished, saying, 'What manner of love is this, wherewith the Father hath loved us, that we should be called the sons of God, and the spouse of Jesus Christ?'

Then for the manner or measure of the man's loving his wife, it must 'be even as himself,' which is evermore with the strongest and highest degrees of affection: so the exhortation goes on to teach us, saying, 'so ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife, loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. This is a great mystery,' that represents the great love of Christ to his Church, and is here set as a pattern of ours, which few, alas! come up or near to; and then follow the words of our text, 'Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife as himself.' Now this love will restrain men from all bitterness and indecencies of behaviour towards their consorts, either in words or actions.

This is required in the next place of Scripture, cited in this exhortation, viz. Col. iii. 19, 'Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.' True love will root out all the sour and black passions of hatred, malice, rancour, and resentment, which imbitter men's minds, and sharpen their tongues against one another; and instead of them, will plant the sweeter passions of desire, joy, and complaisance, in each other's company and welfare, which would make the world the seat of love, and fill it with easy and quiet habitations.

And this will incline them to another duty, mentioned in this exhortation, from St. Peter, who was himself a married man; saying, in his 1st Epist. chap. iii. ver. 7, 'Ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel; and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.' Where husbands are commanded to cohabit with their wives, without separation or contention; for being united by God into one flesh, they are to have one house, one table, and one bed; and to live in the closest union and society, dwelling together according to knowledge, and rendering all due kindness and benevolence to each other. Moreover, husbands are here required to 'give honour to their wives, as unto the weaker vessels.' Their

infirmities call for assistance, sympathy, and condescension to them; and therefore are to be treated, not with contempt, but with honour and respect, with tenderness and affection; to lighten the burden of their sorrows, and to make their lives as easy and as comfortable to them, as may be; and that because 'they are heirs together of the grace of life:' the favour of life is extended to them, as well as men, and though they are inferior to men in their natural capacity, yet in spiritual matters they are equal to them; having the same promises of eternal life; and as good title to the kingdom of heaven as they. Yea, if their piety be greater than that of men, their portion of blessedness will exceed theirs; so that they may be well enough allowed at least an equal regard. In short,—

The man's loving his wife as himself, will include and draw with it all the duties of a good husband, by counselling her in all her doubts, directing her in all affairs, supporting her in all her wants, in praying for her in all times of distress, and promoting her present and future welfare.

'Hitherto ye have heard the duty of the husband towards the wife: now likewise, ye wives, hear and learn your duties to your husbands, even as it is plainly set forth in holy Scripture:' and these are comprised in the word 'reverence,' required in the last part of our text, 'Let the wife see that she reverence her husband.' And this implies,—

First, A loving and hearty affection to him, which is the mutual duty of both parties, and depend much upon one another; the husband's love will enkindle that of the wife, and the wife's love will inflame that of the husband; and both of them must be unfeigned and constant: this love, above all others, must be true, and 'without dissimulation, not in word or in tongue only, but in deed and in truth;' and likewise permanent and lasting, not by fits and starts, coming and going again; but by a fixed and settled perseverance, holding out unto the end. Where this love reigns in the breasts of both, there is the 'family of love,' these enjoy a kind of heaven upon earth, in their way to that above: but where this is wanting, there is a place of misery and torment, often resembled and compared to hell: and they that will enjoy the one, and escape the other, must unite their hearts in conjugal love and affection to one another.

Secondly, The wife's 'reverencing' her husband, implies her submission or subjection to him; for reverence ever supposes a superior, and a due deference and respect paid to him: for parity is the parent of confusion; and where persons are upon the same level, there can be no lasting peace, nor any way of composing and deciding their differences. And therefore in all societies, there must be a superior, to guide and govern the inferiors, without which no order or discipline can be preserved. For which reason in matrimony, to preserve the peace and order of families, God gave the preeminence to the man, and ordered that he should

have 'the rule over the wife,' Gen. iii. 16; which makes it her duty to pay obedience and submission to him. So the next sentence in this exhortation requires, Eph. v. 22, 'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord:' that is, upon the account of the Lord's command laid upon them; or with respect to the authority that the Lord had given to them, which wills them to obey the orders and directions of their husbands, and to submit to their judgment in cases where any difference may arise: and this submission must not be as to a hard and imperious master, forced or constrained, and extorted by compulsion; but 'as unto the Lord,' with a willing, cheerful, and ready obedience.

Which duty is here farther urged from the husband's superiority over the wife, in the next words: 'For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Saviour of the body.' The head you know is the seat of the brains, the source of wisdom, and the residing place of all understanding and knowledge; and is therefore the guide of all the inferior members of the body, to direct them in all their ways and motions. Such is the husband to the wife, and all the other parts of the family, over which he is to preside, and to order and govern them in all their affairs; even as Christ, the head, rules and directs his mystical body the Church, guiding them by his counsel here, and at last bringing them to everlasting life and salvation; which justly styles him 'The Saviour of the body,' being the Author and bestower of eternal life and salvation to all that obey him. From which the apostle infers, therefore—

'As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wife be to her own husband in every thing,' ver. 24; where the Church's subjection to our Saviour is set as a pattern of the wife's subjection to her husband; that as the Church's obedience is universal, and extends to every thing, because nothing that is unjust or indecent is commanded, or expected from her: so is the wife to be obedient to her husband in every thing, where God himself hath not commanded the contrary, in that single case only, He who gave the man his authority hath superseded the woman's obedience, and will be obeyed before him; but in all other cases she hath no dispensation, but must be obedient in every thing. This duty is inculcated by the same apostle in another epistle, Col. iii. 18, 'Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.' Where the apostle farther presses the duty from the fitness and decency of it: for the man being made the ruler, and the woman subjected to his power and governance, it is fit and agreeable to right reason, that she should obey, and give up herself to be ruled and directed by him. Now this fitness arises, partly from the authority of our Maker, who hath thus ordered and commanded it; and partly from the nature and decency of the thing which requires it: for the husband being superior, not only in power, but in parts and endowments of mind, is fitter and

better qualified to govern than the wife, who is the weaker vessel, and stands in need of counsel and assistance. But yet still this fitness must be 'in the Lord;' that is, according to his will, and guided by his word: so that whilst the husband commands nothing, but what is honest and fit to be done, and agreeable to the mind and will of God, so long he hath a right to be obeyed; but if he require any thing that is immodest or unjust, or any way contrary to the will or word of God, there the husband forfeits his power, and can lay no obligation upon the wife to obey, but rather to the contrary.

The last place in this exhortation, setting forth the wife's duty, is 1 Pet. iii. 1—3, &c. 'Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may without the word be won by the conversation of the wife.' Where this difficult duty, that needs many arguments to have it observed, is pressed upon them by another motive; to wit, its being a means of converting and amending a bad husband. That if any, by a loose and dissolute life, obey not the word of God, he may, by the piety, patience, and prudent example of the wife, be wrought upon, and become better. Her submissive, loving, and obliging behaviour may make him see this error of his ways, and win him over to other and better courses; for virtue and piety have strong attractives, and are ofttimes more powerful to persuade than the greatest rhetoric. This may have a good influence even upon bad husbands; 'While they behold their wives' chaste conversation, coupled with fear:' their sweet, amiable, and faithful deportment may make such deep impressions upon them, as even to constrain them to love them; and they must be strangely wicked and obdurate, to resist such powerful charms. These things are all implied in the wife's 'reverencing her husband,' which will draw all the other duties of love, fidelity, and odedience after it.

To all which the Church, from St. Peter, subjoins something touching the dress of holy and virtuous women; 'whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.' Where the apostle condemns the vanity of those women, who lavish away too much of their time and money, in the outward ornaments of costly attire, and vain dresses, that rather disparage than adorn them; and shew more of the folly of their minds, than of the bravery of their bodies. There are indeed but two many of that sex, who spend more hours with the comb and the glass, than they do with the Bible, or needle; and delight more in painting the face, and plaiting the hair, than in praying to God, or pleasing their husbands: these things rather become harlots and prostitutes, than pious and prudent women; their patches rather lessen, than add to their

beauty; and their perfumes betray more of a stinking savour, than fragrant odour in the nostrils of wise men. Against all such vain dressing, and meretricious bravery, the apostle here cautions all wise women; and would have them to mind more the inward adornings of the soul, than any external embellishments of the body, which are corruptible things, that soon wither and decay; and to set forth 'the hidden man of the heart,' with more lasting and incorruptible ornaments, that never fail or fade away, as that of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of high value and esteem in the eyes of God. 'For after this manner (as the apostle goes on) in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands:' where he farther enforces this duty, from the example of pious women in former times, instancing particularly in 'Sarah, who obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord.' And as none were to be reckoned the seed of Abraham, that trod not in the steps of his faith; so none are to be accounted the daughters of Sarah, who do not imitate her in this virtue of obedience: from which therefore let no favour or frowns of others withdraw, nor any terrors or amazement deter or make you afraid; so shall you live in all joy, peace, and comfort in this life, and in the world to come in everlasting life and happiness.

The office concludes with this rubric, 'It is convenient, that the new-married persons should receive the holy communion, at the time of their marriage, or at the first opportunity after their marriage.' Indeed, nothing can be more proper or convenient, than to join the holy sacrament with this holy ordinance, for that will both adorn and consecrate it; it will add the greater grace and reverence to the solemnity, and bind the obligation of the sacred vows and promises made in it, the faster upon them. But if they cannot conveniently receive at the time of marriage, they are advised to embrace the first opportunity of doing it after; which should be carefully and conscientiously minded by all good Christians.

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